

*The*  
**MOVING PICTURE BOYS  
IN EARTHQUAKE LAND**



BY  
**VICTOR APPLETON**



Frank A. Sabine.  
R.F.D. 23 Glenarm,  
Ill.

918 Christmas present from  
father and mother.









AT BLAKE'S VERY FEET A GREAT CHASM OPENED.—Page 115  
*The Moving Picture Boys in Earthquake Land.*

# The Moving Picture Boys in Earthquake Land

OR

Working Amid Many Perils

BY

VICTOR APPLETON

AUTHOR OF "THE MOVING PICTURE BOYS," "THE MOVING PICTURE  
BOYS ON THE COAST," "TOM SWIFT AND HIS MOTOR CYCLE,"  
"TOM SWIFT AND HIS GREAT SEARCHLIGHT," ETC.

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NEW YORK  
GROSSET & DUNLAP  
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*The Moving Picture Boys in Earthquake Land*



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# THE MOVING PICTURE BOYS IN EARTHQUAKE LAND

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## CHAPTER I

### A PERILOUS PROSPECT

“WHEW! Here’s a nice outlook for the people living on this island, Blake!”

“What’s that, Joe?” and the lad addressed looked up from some letters he was reading. “Has anything happened?”

“Well, I should say so; and more is going to, if the predictions of these scientists amount to anything. This is fierce!”

“Well, what is it? Can’t you tell a fellow?”

“It’s this news in the morning paper,” and Joe Duncan extended the sheet in question so that his chum, and partner in the moving picture business, could look at the front page. “It’s about one of the West Indian islands,” he added. “One of the least known ones—San Locas, near Martinique.”

"Well, what about it?" asked Blake, somewhat impatiently, for there was much business on hand to be attended to that day. "Skip the preliminaries, Joe. Get down to brass tacks. Put in a fresh reel and start grinding away. I haven't got much time."

"Oh, I'll get down to business, all right," asserted Joe; "and then we can wait for further particulars, I suppose. But the sum and substance of it is that this island of San Locas is likely to be wiped off the map—sunk—split—blown up or otherwise disposed of in the next month or two. I'm glad I'm not living there."

"So am I, if that's the case. But what's going to do all that? Is there going to be another revolution in one of the banana republics?"

"Nothing like that. Earthquakes and eruptions of a volcano are what are down on the program. That's what's going to make an end of San Locas if these scientific sharps are right. Want to look at the paper?"

"Just for a minute, yes. Then we've got to get busy on making those films for the Board of Education. They want one showing something of the electrical industry, and I've arranged for us to get it. There'll be some good scenes, I guess. Now, let's have a look at this earthquake business."



Blake glanced at the front page of the newspaper that his chum and partner held out to him. Amid the startling headlines he picked out those referring to the subject Joe had brought up.

In brief, the cable message stated that a big volcano on San Locas, one of the infrequently mentioned West Indian islands, had recently showed signs of again becoming active. It had been dormant for nearly a century, but now internal rumblings, some flashes of fire, seen near the ancient crater at night, and a faint haze of smoke occasionally puffing out, had given positive evidence that the inactivity of years was about to be broken.

Further it was stated that there had been tremors felt on the island, in parts far removed from the volcano, and the natives, as well as the few white residents, were in fear of a big quake that would rend the place in twain.

"Say, there *are* likely to be some doings down there soon," remarked Blake, as he passed back the paper.

"That's right. And did you read what that professor says about what's likely to happen almost any time?"

"Yes, there's either going to be a big explosion when the volcano really starts business, or else the island may sink because the earthquake splits it

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apart, or a tidal wave may wash over it. Pleasant prospect; eh?"

"I should say so. And look at these pictures," went on Joe, turning to an inside page. "They show some of the scenes in the Martinique disaster, the Jamaica earthquake, and some drawings of what probably took place when the volcano in this island of San Locas was last active—about a century ago."

"Oh, so it has done stunts before?"

"Sure. That's the reason they're so sure of what is going to happen this time. Every hundred years, about, the same thing has occurred. First the rumblings in the volcano, gradually growing worse. Then the earth tremors, and finally a big hurrah, and great doings."

"But the island was never totally destroyed?" asked Blake, pausing in the act of opening another letter.

"No, not entirely, of course. Part of it did sink beneath the sea, though, about two hundred years ago, according to history, and every time there has been an earthquake a lot of damage has been done."

"And still the people go on living there."

"Yes, you see the same ones aren't there now who were at the last performance," said Joe,

grimly. "I'd like to see the volcano erupt, if I could be at a safe distance."

"So would I," agreed Blake. "But I don't believe we will. Now, if you're through reading and talking about this coming disaster, that may never happen, let's get down to business. I guess it will take us both to make these films."

"All right. I'm with you. But I'm not so sure this thing isn't going to happen, Blake."

"How do you make that out?"

"Why, a lot of college scientists, astronomers and the like are interested in this affair, and they're planning to go down to San Locas if it gets worse."

"Well, let 'em go. We haven't anything to do with it," replied Blake, but he little realized how the affairs of San Locas were soon to affect him and his chum.

The boys, who had been partners in the moving picture business for some time, had built up a good trade along certain commercial lines—making the animated films for societies, for the use of professional lecturers, and lately the New York Board of Education, in which city Joe and Blake had their office, had taken to using films to illustrate certain lines of study. So the lads were kept busy.

This morning, as Blake had said, they had been

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engaged to "film" certain operations in the electrical industry—showing how the commercial current is generated, and to what uses it is put.

"This is going to be easier than making some of those theatrical films out on the coast," remarked Joe, as he and his partner, leaving their office in charge of a clerk, started off.

"That's right, especially with C. C. Piper making objections all the while—thinking he was going to catch his death of cold when he had to do a tank drama stunt."

"Sure enough, he was a queer chap."

"I wonder what has become of him?" mused Joe.

"I haven't seen him since he came back with us from our last picture-making expedition," replied Blake. "I guess maybe he's off with some other theatrical film agency. He didn't go back to his old place with Mr. Ringold."

"No, so I heard. Well, I'd like to see him again, just for fun. But this is one of the places where we're expected, I reckon," and the boys, who had gone to the scene of part of their operations in a taxicab, got out to enter a large building where electrical power was generated.

Now, since there is little of interest to the reader in the work that Joe and Blake had in hand that morning, I will not weary you by de-



scribing it. Sufficient to say that they successfully "filmed" the various stages of the electrical work. And, as I have, in the previous books of this series, told something of how moving pictures are made, and as I shall have occasion, as this story progresses, to go into some details of the work, I will not make explanations here.

But I am sure you will be more interested in what was taking place at the office of the two boys about the time they were in the electrical establishment.

Joe and Blake had scarcely left their place of business when there entered a man with every indication of haste and excitement.

"Where's Joe—and Blake?" he asked of the clerk.

"Gone to get some electrical films for the Board of Education, Mr. Hadley."

"When will they be back?"

"It's hard to say. I heard 'em mention, though, that they had a big day's work ahead of them."

"Pshaw! Just when I want them, too. It's one of the greatest chances that ever came to them to get rare films. I wonder if I could connect with them by telephone and tell them to hurry back here."

"There's a list they left, showing the different

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places they were going to call at," remarked the clerk, as he held out a slip of paper.

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Hadley, who was also in the moving picture business. "I'll see if I can raise them."

He did call several places, but while the boys had not yet reached some, at others they had just left.

"They're too great hustlers for me!" finally exclaimed Mr. Hadley, as he hung up the receiver for about the fifth time. "I guess I'll have to wait until they get back. I hope they won't be long. Hello, they've been reading about it, I see."

"What's that?" asked the clerk, curiously.

"The impending earthquake in San Locas," and picking up the paper that the boys had left behind, Mr. Hadley began a perusal of the startling news.

So absorbed did he become in it that he scarcely noticed the passage of time, and when he looked up from the sheet, at hearing someone enter the office, a look of pleased surprise came over his face as he saw the moving picture boys.

"Hello, Joe—Blake!" he exclaimed. "I thought you were never coming back. I've got something that will just suit you!"

"What is it—more theatrical films?" asked Blake. "I don't know that we can undertake any

more. We've got about all we can handle, though we would like to oblige you and Mr. Ringold."

"No theatrical business in this!" cried Mr. Hadley. "Do you see this—did you read it?" and he shook the newspaper at the boys.

"We sure did," replied Joe.

"Than you'll understand what I want. You're to go down to San Locas and get moving pictures of the volcano in eruption and the earth quaking!"

## CHAPTER II

### THEY WILL GO

FOR a moment Blake and Joe did not know whether Mr. Hadley was in earnest, or only joking. Yet a second look at his face, and the dramatic manner in which he held out the paper, showed them that he meant what he said.

"You'll go; won't you?" Mr. Hadley went on. "It's the chance of a lifetime. A friend of mine, connected with the Smithsonian Institution, is going down there with some of the government scientists, and he offered me the post of moving picture operator. I can't go because I've just signed a new contract with Mr. Ringold. But you boys can. I've turned the job over to you."

"You have?" cried Joe, in surprise.

"Sure! You'll go; won't you?"

"Why, we just got back from Africa!" exclaimed Blake. "And we certainly had a time there, getting pictures of wild animals. Now you want us to go to an even more dangerous place,



and harness a volcano to a celluloid film. This is the limit!"

"It sure is," agreed Joe.

"Oh, listen, now!" put in Mr. Hadley. "This is a great chance! You don't want to pass it up that way. Let me explain," and he proceeded to go into details.

While he is thus engaged I will take just a few minutes to more formally introduce my new readers to Blake and Joe, the moving picture boys. Those who have perused the former books in the series will not need this, and they may, if they wish, skip this part, which I will make as short as possible.

It was true, as Blake had said, that he and his chum had, only a few months before this present story opens, come back from an expedition to the jungles of Africa, where they not only "filmed" wild animals of various sorts, under all kinds of conditions, but they were instrumental in rescuing Joe's sister from a band of African savages. And as the events leading to this dramatic situation had their beginning some time before, I will just give you a little history of it.

Joe and Blake made their bow to the reading public in the first book of this series, entitled "The Moving Picture Boys." There they were discovered working on adjoining farms—Joe for

a Mr. Zachariah Bradley, and Blake for his uncle, Jonathan Haverstraw.

But one day Mr. Bradley announced that he could no longer afford to hire Joe and, about the same time, Blake's uncle decided to sell his farm, and enter a Home for the Aged. This left both boys without places.

Fortunately, however, at this time Mr. Calvert Hadley, a moving picture operator, came to Fayetteburg, where the boys lived, to get some views. He had part of a theatrical company, organized by Mr. Jacob Ringold, with him. The boys took part in a dramatic situation, became acquainted with Mr. Hadley and were engaged by him to come to New York to learn the moving picture business.

Mr. Hadley proposed to start a "moving picture newspaper," showing on the screen scene of daily interest. The venture was a success from the start, and the boys "made good." Incidentally they caused the arrest of a reckless motorist who had run into the carriage of Mrs. Betty Randolph, of Fayetteburg, and with the reward paid them they bought some moving picture machines of their own, and went into business for themselves.

All this while Joe never imagined he had relatives, as his early life was shrouded in

tery. But one day he got a strange letter. It was from a Western cowboy, who wrote that, having seen photographs of the moving picture boys in a magazine devoted to that business, he had recognized one as a lad for whom a certain Mrs. Duncan was looking.

This Mr. Duncan had said he had a half-brother who had a son and daughter of whom he had lost track, and it was thought that Joe might be the missing boy.

Naturally this gave our hero some ideas, and he wanted to start in search of the cowboy who might put him on the trail of his relative. But, unfortunately, the writer of the letter neglected to give any address, save "Big B Ranch," and the mark showed this to be somewhere in Arizona—but that was all.

In the book, the second of the series, entitled "The Moving Picture Boys in the West," there is set down an account of how the lads started off on a three-fold mission. One was to get some views of moving picture dramas among the cowboys and Indians—for Mr. Ringold decided that he needed some of these views—another was to film some of the Yaqui and Navajo Indians, who had broken off their reservations to perform some of their weird dances, and the third was to locate their relatives, if possible.

How they succeeded is told in the book. They got the theatrical films without trouble, but getting pictures of the fanatical Indians was more difficult and dangerous, though it was accomplished. Then, almost at the last moment, Joe met his father's half-brother, Sergeant Duncan, who was with the United States troopers who rescued the boys from the redmen.

And Sergeant Duncan put Joe on the track of finding his father, who was employed in one of the lighthouses on the lower California coast.

The third book of the series, called "The Moving Picture Boys on the Coast," relates the details of their trip to the ocean.

Mr. Ringold, proprietor of the theatrical company, decided that he needed some coast dramas, and as a lighthouse would form a good background, he decided to take his company to California, and let the boys make films there. This suited Joe, who wanted to meet his father.

They reached the place, all right, but Mr. Duncan had just left. There was a rumor that he had fled to escape arrest as a wrecker of vessels by means of putting up false coast lights, and this made Joe feel bad. But, eventually, it was proved that the reason Mr. Duncan went away was because he had a clue that his missing daughter had gone as a missionary helper to China.



On his way there the vessel on which he sailed was wrecked. He was picked up by a craft bound back to California, and that vessel succumbed to a fierce gale, when off shore near the place where the moving picture boys and their friends were staying.

They helped the life savers in the rescue, incidentally getting some fine views of the wreck. Then, to Joe's surprise, his father came ashore among those rescued. Of course explanations followed, and father and son were reunited. Then Mr. Duncan told how, when the children were young, their mother had died, and he had placed them in the care of friends while he went to the gold fields.

When he came back, a rich man, this family had become separated, and no one knew where Joe and Jessie, his sister, had gone. Eventually Joe grew up, went East and got work on the farm, later becoming a moving picture operator.

The clue to the whereabouts of Jessie was faint until her father was told that she was probably in China. He started there, as we have seen, but his vessel was lost. After he found Joe, and the charge of wrecking was found to be false, and the real wreckers arrested, Joe and his father decided to go to China to find Jessie.

Just as they were about to start, however, word

came that instead of being in China she had gone as a helper to a Mr. and Mrs. Brown, missionaries in the jungles of Africa.

"Then it's to Africa we'll go!" declared Joe, and they made their plans accordingly. In the fourth book of the series—"The Moving Picture Boys in the Jungle"—I have related their experiences getting films of wild beasts.

For, as they were about to start for the "Dark Continent," they received an offer from a circus manager to make some films of the animals as they appeared in their native wilds. Joe and Blake agreed to do this and took their picture cameras to Africa with them.

Unexpectedly they found on the steamer a Mr. Christopher Cutler Piper, the comedian of the theatrical company. Mr. Piper, who was an odd character, suddenly decided to take a rest and vacation, and, as he had hunted big game in India, he made up his mind to try his luck in Africa.

How Joe and Blake went on "safari," taking an expedition into the heart of the jungle; how big game was shot and filmed, and how they found Jessie, after the mission station had been burned by natives—all this is told in the book.

There were dangers and hardships, many perils and discomforts, but they were all part of the "game," and the boys played it to the limit.

When the kidnapping natives had been dispersed by a fusillade of fireworks, and Jessie and her friends rescued, the start back to civilization was made. Mr. Duncan was happy in recovering son and daughter, and Joe and Blake were glad that they had obtained such rare films.

Just a word about Mr. Piper, and I will resume this story. He was the gloomiest comedian who ever caused a laugh. That is, he was gloomy off the stage, not on it, and was often called "Gloomy" as a nickname. More often, however, he was simply spoken of as "C. C." He did not like the appellation "Christopher Cutler," and, to oblige him, his friends spoke of him as Mr. Piper, or C. C., to be brief.

C. C. was continually predicting some direful happening. Either the train he was riding in was going to be in a collision, they were never going to get anything to eat, or every film taken was sure to be a failure—in short, he was a pessimist of the worst kind. And yet, even while uttering sad words, he would make the most comical faces, and afterward whistle a jolly tune. It was merely a sort of habit with him.

On the African trip, however, he showed a new side to his character, and when others became discouraged over the prospects of rescuing Jessie

Duncan, C. C. would declare that everything would come out right in the end—as it did.

With their rare films, with the rescued girl and with the missionaries, who decided to take a furlough after their harrowing experiences, the boys, with Mr. Duncan, started for New York.

They had been there some time now, and Joe, with his father and sister, and, of course, Blake, who was like a brother, almost, had taken a home in one of the New Jersey suburbs. There they lived happily, the boys carrying on their business most successfully, and Mr. Duncan engaging in business for himself. As for Jessie, she and Blake—but hold on, that's a secret I'm not supposed to tell—at least not yet awhile.

And so we find our heroes again facing a chance of more adventure.

“Well, boys, what are you going to do about it?” asked Mr. Hadley as he finished his explanation. “You’re not going to miss a chance like this; are you?”

“Think of it! You are part of a scientific expedition. In reality you’re working for Uncle Sam, and you’ll not only make big money, but you’ll gain a reputation. It isn’t everybody who can make moving pictures for the Smithsonian Institution, but I know you boys will fill the bill.

And think of the sights you'll see—some rare ones, I'll wager."

"We have been seeing rare sights ever since we got into this business," remarked Blake.

"That's right," agreed Joe; "from tenement fires to the charge of an African rhinoceros."

"I know you have had some great experiences," said Mr. Hadley, "and I don't blame you for not wanting to go off so soon again after your trip to the jungle. But this chance may not come again—at least not in a long time."

"There's something in that," said Blake, slowly.

"Of course," admitted Joe. "But——"

"Earthquakes—volcanoes shooting out smoke and flame and blazing rocks," went on Mr. Hadley. "The ground opening up—great cracks—yawning chasms filled with red hot lava—explosions galore—the whole island going to pieces, maybe. Think of it! Think of the moving pictures you can get—think of the chance——"

"Of the chance of us not coming back at all," interrupted Blake, grimly. "If we fall down the volcano, or if the earth swallows us, what good will our reputation or money be?"

"Oh, pshaw! Don't come any of that C. C. business!" begged the moving picture man. "Be



sports! Say you'll go. It will be the chance of a lifetime. I'd go myself if I could. Will you?"

Joe and Blake hesitated a moment. They looked at each other, and each one well knew what was passing in the mind of his chum. They were both wavering—it was easy to see that.

"Suppose this earthquake doesn't materialize after all?" asked Blake, who was rather cautious. "We'd go down there, maybe get no films, lose a lot of time, get nothing for it from the government—for Uncle Sam isn't going to pay for pictures he doesn't get—suppose all this happens, and we come back here to find our regular business gobbled up by our competitors—what then?"

"More C. C. business," murmured Mr. Hadley.

"But supposing this quake doesn't quake?" asked Joe, who saw his chum's point.

"It's bound to happen, I'm sure," said Mr. Hadley. "Why, that volcano has never yet started to erupt but what it went on to a grandstand finish. And with every eruption there has been an earthquake. It's as sure as guns that, if you go there, you'll get all the excitement you want."

"I rather guess so," remarked Blake, grimly.

"But will you go?" asked Mr. Hadley, eagerly. "I half promised my friend you would, and I

don't want to disappoint him. Come, say you'll go!"

Once more the boys hesitated. Then Joe looked at Blake with a half-formed question in his eyes. Blake nodded slightly, and then said:

"Oh, I suppose we'll have to," and the lad smiled. "Shall we, Joe?"

"I'll go if you will," replied his chum.

"Then it's a go," went on Blake. "Wind up the business here as soon as you can, Joe, and we'll go hunting earthquakes and volcanoes."

"Hurrah!" yelled Mr. Hadley, leaping up and holding out his hands to the boys. "I knew you wouldn't go back on me!"

## CHAPTER III

### OFF FOR SAN LOCAS

"OH, JOE, I wish you weren't going!"

"Can't help it, Sis. We're in for it now, I guess; eh, Blake?"

"Yes, we've given our word, and we can hardly back out now."

"Oh, Blake, are you going, too?" and Jessie Duncan looked from her brother to the latter's chum in startled surprise.

"Both of us," replied Blake. "Wouldn't you like to join this little excursion to a volcanic island, Jessie?"

"Never!" exclaimed the girl. "I—I can't bear to think of it—to think of you going there. Why do you?"

The boys had come from their New York office and were in the pleasant home, over which Jessie presided, keeping house for her father, brother and Blake, who was almost like one of the family. Following their decision to accept the offer Mr. Hadley had made them, Joe and his chum at once began to get their affairs in shape.

They had many orders for films to be made for various customers. Some of these orders the boys turned over to Mr. Hadley, while others they gave to the more friendly of their competitors. Their affairs were not wholly in shape, however, as several days would be required for that. They expected to leave in about a week, and, leaving the details to be arranged later, they had come home with the rather startling news.

"Why do you go?" repeated Jessie. She was a very pretty girl. Blake had formerly thought Miss Birdie Lee, a member of the theatrical company, about as nice as anyone he had ever met, but since seeing Joe's sister—but there! I promised not to tell, and I am not going to. All the effects of her captivity among the African natives had worn away, and she was happy in the company of her father, brother and Blake. "Haven't you had enough thrills and adventures?" she continued. "I should think your trip to Africa would have been enough for a year or two," and she smiled at Blake.

"One would think so," he admitted; "but moving pictures and science never stand still, I guess. They're continually advancing, and, as we're in the moving picture business, we have to advance also."

"We're going to be scientists, too, in a way,"

added Joe. "You know Mr. Hadley said we were to be officially attached to the Smithsonian Institution for the time being, to give us official status while taking the pictures."

"That's right," agreed Blake. "Oh, I think we'll have a good time after we get started. I was beginning to long for some more excitement other than getting films for the Board of Education."

"So was I," admitted Joe. "Yes, I think it will be great when we get to San Locas."

"Oh, how you boys can talk that way I don't understand!" exclaimed Jessie. "Why, it's dangerous; isn't it?"

"Maybe," conceded Joe.

"A little," allowed Blake.

"Then how can you have the courage to go?"

"Look here, Jessie; didn't you have to have courage when you went as a missionary helper in the jungle?"

"Well, yes; I suppose I did."

"And didn't you think you were going to do some good?" asked Blake.

"Yes; of course. But this——"

"Of course this isn't missionary work," agreed Blake; "but, in a way, it's helpful and does some good."

"I don't see how," objected the girl.

"Why, you know scientists are always trying to discover the cause of earthquakes, and why volcanoes erupt. Very few of these scientists can be on the spot when these things take place, but by means of moving pictures they can get a good idea of what happened."

"That's right," put in Joe; "and, while they can't prevent earthquakes or the eruptions of volcanoes, they can perhaps discover means of making them less harmful. You know in some countries they have earthquakes several times a week, and the people have learned how to build their houses so as to make the danger of their falling less serious."

"And besides," added his chum, "there may be a way found for predicting earthquakes and eruptions far enough ahead so that precautions can be taken."

"I thought they had a machine for doing that," said Mr. Duncan, who had come in to hear part of the strange news. "Isn't there some sort of apparatus that tells when an earthquake is going to happen?"

"No," answered Blake, who had been looking up the subject that afternoon; "there is an instrument called a seismograph, which registers earthquake shocks in almost any part of the world, indicating how long it lasted and in which direc-



tion the tremors traveled. That's all they've been able to perfect as yet. But maybe if we get some good moving pictures of the fracas they can do better; eh, Joe?"

"That's right!" exclaimed the other. "We'll be in the Hall of Fame before we know it."

"Oh, you boys!" exclaimed Jessie. "I can see that you are going to that dreadful island."

"Have you thought well over this?" asked Mr. Duncan. "I know you boys have become rather hardened to danger, but this seems the worst I ever heard of."

"Well, it isn't going to be any kindergarten exercise; I can see that," admitted Joe. "But if a chap went down into the crater of Vesuvius to get moving pictures, I reckon we can take a chance on this island."

"Did someone really go down in the crater?" asked Jessie, much interested.

"He surely did, and here's a magazine article telling all about his adventures," and Blake passed it over. They all read it with increasing interest, and then began to talk over the coming trip.

It was two days later, when the lads had made further progress in winding up their affairs, temporarily, that Mr. Hadley again called on them, in company with Professor Martin of the Smithsonian Institution.

"This is the scientist with whom you will go," said the moving picture operator. "He will instruct you in your duties and arrange the details with you."

"Glad to make your acquaintance, boys," said the scientist, who was a small, bald man. "I trust we shall get some good films."

"If there's anything doing these lads can film it," declared Mr. Hadley, who was proud of his pupils.

"When can you start?" asked Mr. Martin.

"In about a week," replied Blake, after a short consultation with Joe. "Our affairs will be in good shape by then."

"And when do you think we'll get back?" asked Joe, wishing to form some idea of when they could resume business in New York.

"Well, that all depends," said Professor Martin, slowly.

"On what?" suggested Mr. Hadley.

"On whether we can escape the volcano and the earthquake, I fancy," replied Blake, grimly. "Well, we'll take the chance, I guess; eh, Joe?"

"Yes; no backing out now. It's too late. But how are things going on down there now, Professor?"

"Fine! Fine! Couldn't be better," was the enthusiastic response. "Some of my colleagues

who preceded me wired me to-day from an adjacent island that the smoke from the volcano was much thicker. The flames spout up almost every hour at night, and the earth tremors have increased wonderfully. Oh, matters could not be better for us."

"I suppose the natives there don't look at it in the same light; do they, Professor?" asked Mr. Hadley, with a grim smile.

"Well—er—you could hardly expect them to. And yet if it is bound to happen science ought to get the benefit of it."

"Of course," agreed Joe.

"Did you say your friends—the other scientists—had sent you a message?" asked Blake, curiously.

"Yes, I received it to-day."

"And it came from a near-by island?"

"Yes—Martinique."

"Why was that?" and Blake waited expectantly for an answer.

"Why—er—I believe the cable station at San Locas was partly destroyed by a tremor there, or at least the operator thought it was going to be, so he left hurriedly, and there is no way of cabling unless one goes to Martinique," was the answer.

"Then things have already begun to happen down there?" suggested Blake.

"I think so," agreed the professor. "That is why I am so anxious to get down there. I stayed behind to arrange for the shipment of some scientific instruments, but they are all ready now, and I can start at any time. My colleagues will do the observing until I arrive."

"Well, if we're going we might as well go," said Blake. "Maybe we can make it in less than a week."

And they did. Four days afterward they were ready to start. Their moving picture cameras—two hand machines, and an automatic worked by a compressed-air motor—were packed, together with a number of reels of film, some especially treated to be exposed under great heat. This was designed to use at the volcano.

"We'll get as close as we can," decided Blake, grimly.

Good-byes were said to Mr. Duncan and Jessie—rather tearful farewells, too; the final arrangements were made, word was sent to those already at San Locas that the moving picture operators were on their way, and one sunny summer morning the two boys and Professor Martin took passage on one of the West Indian line steamers, bound for San Locas.

## CHAPTER IV

### QUEER PHENOMENA

"WELL, this is something like traveling, Blake."

"That's right, Joe. It beats being on safari, with a thousand, more or less, ticks getting at you, or a lot of flies, ants, or other jiggers trying to make a human sandwich out of you."

"It isn't as exciting, though."

"Oh, you'll get excitement soon enough," put in Professor Martin.

The boys, with their new friend, were on the deck of the *Indian Prince*, steaming southward from New York. They were about a day out, on their trip to San Locas, and had, in a measure, "gotten their sea legs."

That is to say they were not seasick, though many of the passengers were. But Blake and Joe had traveled so much in the last two years that they were becoming veteran "globe-trotters."

"Yes, I expect things will be lively enough

when we get on that volcanic island," agreed Blake, as he looked over the side at the heaving waters.

"I don't suppose you will hear from any of your friends—the other scientists—until you reach the island; will you?" asked Joe of Mr. Martin.

"Hardly," was the answer, "though they may go over to Martinique and send me a wireless. But I doubt if they will have time for that, since, if the volcano is at all active, and if there are earthquakes, they will want to observe them—make records and get data. So, really, I don't expect to have any word from them."

Joe and Blake had made themselves familiar with the ship, and had soon become friends with most of the officers and some of the crew. It was not a large steamer, and very few passengers were aboard.

"How long is this voyage going to take?" inquired Joe.

"Oh, only a few days," replied Mr. Martin. "I've been down this way before, and we generally make good time and have fair weather. I tried to get to Jamaica at the time of the earthquake there, but I was too late to witness the phenomena. I hope I will be more successful here."



"Let's ask the captain if he saw anything of the earthquake the last time he was at San Locas," suggested Blake. "Then we can get a line on what to expect."

This suited Joe, and the two lads were soon in conversation with the commander of the steamer.

"No, boys, I didn't see any signs of the earthquake when I was last down in this neighborhood," replied Captain Wilson; "for the simple reason that I gave the island a wide berth."

"How about the volcano?" asked Blake. "You ought to be able to see that some distance out, as it's rather high, I believe, and if it shot up flames or smoke it ought to have been as visible as a lighthouse."

"Well, I did see a cloud of smoke in the direction of San Locas," admitted Captain Wilson, "and some of the passengers, who came from Martinique, said it was the volcano beginning to get busy. But I'm not sure of it."

"We soon will be," went on Joe. "For we'll touch at San Locas soon; won't we, captain?"

The commander did not answer for a moment, and the lad thought he had not heard the question. He was about to repeat it, when he saw that Captain Wilson was regarding him and Blake curiously.

"Do you lads really mean to say you're going

to land on that island, that's likely, according to all reports, to be rent by an earthquake any day? Are you really going there?"

"We sure are," replied Joe. "It's too late to draw back now. Besides, you're going to land there yourself; aren't you?" and he regarded the captain curiously.

"Well, I had been counting on it," was the cautious reply; "but if there are indications that would make it dangerous, why, I would not feel——"

"Captain!" came a hail from the first mate, "may I speak to you a moment," and he put his head in the commander's cabin where the two boys were.

"Certainly, Mr. Haskins," was the reply. "Come in: I was just telling the boys——"

"Oh, we'll see you some other time," said Blake quickly, for he noticed that the mate hesitated, as though what he had to tell the captain was of a private nature. "Come on, Joe," and the two chums went out.

"Say, what do you suppose is up?" asked Joe, as they went toward their stateroom.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean the way the captain hesitated when we asked him if he wasn't going to land at San

Locas. Do you suppose he won't put us off there, after we've made all our arrangements?"

"It's hard to say, Joe. I did notice that he acted rather strangely about it when we asked him. But maybe that is only natural. Certainly, if there is an earthquake in progress on the island when we get to it, we couldn't expect the ship to dock there. There might come a tidal wave and carry her away up the beach."

"Then how are we going to land—swim in?"

"No; we may have to land at Martinique, or some other nearby island, and make our way over as best we can."

"That won't be much fun, Blake."

"Well, we're not out for fun, Joe; we're on business for the government, and whether the job is hard or easy we've got to do it."

"Oh, sure. We'll get some moving pictures in some way or other. If we only had an airship, now, we would be right in it."

"Yes, we may come to that sooner or later. It would be a great stunt to take moving pictures from an aeroplane."

"That's right," agreed Joe. "But say, I wonder what the mate wanted to tell the captain? He acted as though it was a secret. I hope nothing has happened to the ship. Maybe part of the cargo is on fire."

"Say, you're as bad as C. C. Piper!" laughed Blake. "Don't cross a bridge until you see its smoke. By the way, I wonder what can have become of our gloomy old friend, anyhow?"

"Give it up," replied Joe. "But I know what I'm going to do."

"What?"

"Look over our moving picture cameras and get one loaded up with a reel of film. If we're only a few days' travel from the island we may see something worth filming at any time now."

"That's right, Joe—I'm with you," and the lads went to where they had placed their cameras. Soon they were busy oiling and adjusting the mechanism.

Nothing resulted in the next two days to indicate that anything was the matter aboard the steamer. Whatever the reason for the consultation of the captain and mate, it was not made public, nor did the commander again speak to the boys along the line where he had been interrupted—about the possible danger of landing at San Locas.

"I guess everything will be all right," decided Joe, as he laid aside a fully loaded moving picture camera, and Blake agreed with him.

As I have in the first, and other volumes of this series, given the details of how moving pic-

tures are taken, developed, printed and made ready to be thrown on the screen, I will not weary my readers with going over that again. Those who are perusing this, as their first book of the series, may, by referring to the previous ones, learn how the business is conducted.

The weather continued pleasant and the ship was making good time. Professor Martin kept pretty much to himself, leaving the boys to their own devices. The scientist was continually consulting books, or making notes and memoranda of the wonderful things he had seen, or hoped to witness.

No wireless message came to our party of travelers, though the *Indian Prince* was equipped with the necessary apparatus, both for sending and receiving.

At the request of Professor Martin, Captain Wilson sent out a general request for information to all ships within his zone. He asked if the commanders had noticed any signs of the volcano or earthquake at San Locas.

There were one or two replies—not many, as only a few ships passed close to the little-known island. It was out of the track of trade, Captain Wilson explained. These wireless messages were rather indefinite. One said that strong cross-currents had been noticed in the ocean, and

another spoke of those aboard the ship having smelled strong fumes of sulphur one day, when they were some distance from San Locas.

"Then the volcano is still active!" declared the professor on being given this message. "I guess we'll not be disappointed, boys."

They were within a few hours of Martinique one night, and expected to make it by morning. Joe and Blake had gone to their stateroom, and had spent some time getting their baggage in shape for a landing, as they had been told that the ship would probably remain at Martinique for a day or two, and they wanted to see the sights.

It must have been about midnight when Blake was awakened by being almost tossed out of his bunk. As the weather had been calm when he turned in, he thought a sudden storm had come up.

"I say, Joe!" he called. "Are you awake?"

"Yes. Was that you pushing me?"

"No; I was nearly knocked out of my bunk myself. It must be getting rough. Let's take a look."

As the boys arose, turned on the electric light in their room, and hastily dressed, they were almost thrown off their feet by another lurch of the ship.

"Say, this is some storm!" cried Joe.



"It is that," agreed Blake.

At the same time they became aware of a commotion on deck, and in various parts of the ship. There was confused shouting and giving of orders. A jangle of bells seemed to sound some alarm.

Out on deck rushed the two lads, to meet several other startled passengers. Professor Martin was there also.

"What's the matter?" demanded Joe.

"A series of small tidal waves," answered the professor. "There is no danger, however."

Hardly had he spoken than he had to clutch at Blake to save himself from falling, for the ship lurched heavily again.

"No danger?" cried a woman passenger. "Why, we're going to sink! Oh, dear!"

"No danger at all, madam, I assure you," went on the professor. "These are merely a series of small waves, probably caused by some tremor of the sea bottom, the effect of an earthquake. They can do no damage, for we are not near enough to any land to be carried ashore. It is no worse than a storm at sea."

"I believe you're right," said Captain Wilson, coming up at that moment. "There is no danger, for we have a stout ship; but I don't like it, all the same."

He looked over the side. The sea was heaving strangely, though the night was calm, and there was not a breath of wind. Suddenly the darkness was illuminated by several flashes off to the south.

"Lightning!" someone exclaimed.

"The volcano of San Locas!" declared the professor. "We are witnessing some of the phenomena of nature. Oh, if I was only there now!"

"Well, that's the last place I'd want to be!" exclaimed a man. "No volcanic or earthquake islands for me!"

The queer light died away, only to flash up again, and once more a great wave, coming seemingly from below the surface of the ocean, heaved the ship upward.

## CHAPTER V

### DANGER

EXCITEMENT aboard the *Indian Prince* grew. All the passengers were awake now, crowding on deck about the captain and the group formed by the moving picture boys and Professor Martin. The commander continued to assert that there was no danger, but his looks and manner did not bear him out.

Professor Martin, however, was better fitted to calm the passengers. He explained how tidal waves were caused by some disturbance of the earth beneath the surface of the ocean.

"Just as if you shoved up the bottom of the bathtub when it was full of water," said Blake, practically.

"Exactly," agreed the professor, "and that is as good an explanation of it as any scientist could give. Of course, tidal waves are dangerous in two ways. They may wash up on shore, destroying seaport cities and towns, just as in Gal-

veston, Texas, great damage was done a few years ago. Or a tidal wave may be dangerous to shipping by carrying vessels so far inland that, when the waters subside, it is impossible to get the craft out to sea again. And, of course, a great tidal wave has irresistible force.

"But these are only a series of small ones, and there is comparatively little danger while we are out at sea. We are no worse off than if we were in a storm, for then the wind makes the waves from the surface, and in this case the waves come from the bottom upward."

This explanation served, in a measure, to calm some of the passengers; but very few of them went back to bed. Joe and Blake remained up, anxious to see all of the strange phenomena, and wishing it was daylight that they might observe the happenings to better advantage.

"Though making moving pictures of a tidal wave while out at sea won't be very successful," said Blake.

"No; you've got to have a shore line to show it off properly," agreed his chum.

Professor Martin made many notes of the queer occurrence. The waves seemed to be subsiding now and the vessel, which was proceeding at reduced speed, rested on a more even keel.

The light flashed up at intervals and a little

later, when it was nearly morning, a wind sprang up, bringing with it a peculiar odor.

"Do you get that?" cried Joe.

"I sure do," replied Blake, sniffing the air. "It's sulphur."

"No doubt about it," conceded Professor Martin. "Boys, we are in the vicinity of an active volcano."

"You mean on San Locas?" asked Joe.

"Probably, though there are volcanoes below the surface of the ocean, you know. They may erupt and pour out quantities of gas. The bubbles would travel upward until they reached the surface, and they would produce the characteristic odor. But I have hopes that the sulphur we now smell comes from San Locas."

By daylight all disturbance of the sea had gone down, though the smell of sulphur increased.

"If it's as bad as that away off here, what must it be on that island?" asked Joe. "I can see our finish, Blake, if we have to make moving pictures in that atmosphere."

"We ought to have brought along some of the firemen's smoke helmets," conceded Blake. "But perhaps it rises in the air, and on the ground it may not be bad at all. We can't tell until we get there."

A little later they sighted Martinique, and the

vessel was sent ahead at full speed. All the passengers felt easier now, though many of them shook their heads when they learned that Blake, Joe and the professor intended landing on the volcanic island.

"You're the only ones bound for there," said the captain; "and I'll say now what I was going to say before, but did not—I don't believe I'll dare berth at San Locas."

"What!" exclaimed the professor. "How are we going to get there, then?"

"I don't know," answered the commander, scratching his head in perplexity. "Of course your tickets call for a stop at San Locas, but if it's dangerous to go there I can't take my vessel in. I'll have to think of some other scheme for you."

"Can we get a small launch, or yacht, at Martinique and go from there?" asked Blake.

"Perhaps," said the captain. "We'll see when we get there."

A little later they docked at St. Pierre, Martinique, and all the passengers went ashore. The boys and the professor at once began to make inquiries as to what had happened on San Locas.

They were told that there had been only a few slight earthquake shocks, as yet, and that the volcano, while sending out flames, smoke and



some ashes and lava, was not considered to be fully alive yet.

"But when she does!" exclaimed an Englishman, who had been on the island a short time before; "when she does, my word! Something is going to cut loose!"

A number of the residents on San Locas had come to Martinique, in spite of the fact that there had, a few years previous, been a terrible disaster there of volcanic nature, where thousands had been killed.

"It looks to me like jumping out of the frying pan into the fire," declared Joe.

"I don't believe there's going to be such danger as they imagine," asserted Blake.

Professor Martin inquired whether any of his friends had come to Martinique from San Locas, or had sent any messages to him, or to the scientists in Washington, but was answered in the negative.

"No word since before we left New York," said Mr. Martin. "And they haven't been here since. I wonder——" he stopped suddenly.

"Are you worried?" asked Joe.

"Yes—that is—no—there's no use worrying until I have something definite to worry about. I guess they can take care of themselves, and if any big disaster had happened on the island they

would know of it here. I guess we won't worry—yet awhile."

It was learned that several small boats were in the habit of making trips from Martinique to San Locas, but since the danger of an earthquake, or eruption, had become imminent all the captains had withdrawn their craft from the service.

"Well, I'll take a chance, and try to land you there," said Captain Wilson, when he had finished his business in Martinique. "I'll do my best, but I can't promise anything."

Again the boys and the professor were on their way. But they were destined to disappointment. They sighted San Locas in comparatively short time, for the *Indian Prince* was sent ahead at full speed.

"There it is!" announced the captain, as he stood beside the boys and the professor on the bridge, where they had been invited. They were now the only passengers on the ship. "There's your volcano island!"

The boys saw a dark mass lying in the sea—a low island, with a great peak in the centre. And, as they looked, they beheld something that startled them.

From this high peak there suddenly shot up a pillar of flame, amid a dark cloud of smoke. High into the air it went.

"There she goes!" cried Blake. "She's erupting, all right!"

"And we are just in time!" exclaimed the professor, taking out a notebook and making some hurried entries.

"It's too far off for moving pictures!" lamented Joe. "But I'll get the camera all ready so when we get closer I can film it."

"Closer!" cried the captain. "Do you think I'm going to take my ship any closer?"

Before any of them could answer there came across the water the sound of a dull explosion, and a great wave seemed to rise in front of the vessel's bow.

## CHAPTER VI

### ON THE ISLAND

"WE'RE in for it now!" cried Captain Wilson, as he shoved the telegraph signal lever over to full speed ahead, in order to meet the oncoming rush of water. The *Indian Prince* seemed fairly to leap forward, but it was almost too late. However, the craft split the wall of water evenly, though part of the big comber swept the deck, and the spray flew over the bridge, drenching the boys, the professor and the commander.

"If there's another one, we're goners!" cried the captain.

But no other wave came, fortunately, though it was some time before the heaving waters subsided after the passage of the monstrous one. The vessel pitched and tossed on the turbulent sea until her speed carried her beyond the area of disturbance.

"We were lucky that time!" cried Joe, as he began setting up the moving picture camera.

"What made that happen?" asked Blake.

"Some disturbance deep down in the earth, under the ocean bed," said the professor. "Or perhaps it was a reaction from the explosion in the crater of the volcano. It is still keeping up," he added, as he pointed to the island, in the centre of which there reared up the mountain of fire. Flames and smoke were still coming from it, though after that first explosion there was only a dull rumble, like distant thunder.

"Smell that sulphur!" cried Joe, who had been trying to get a series of pictures, but who had given it up because of the distance. "It's stronger than ever."

"That's right," agreed Blake. "But, captain, what are you going to do?" for the commander had turned the vessel about and was now headed almost directly away from the volcanic island.

"What am I doing?" asked Captain Wilson. "I'm not going any closer to that dangerous island, if that's what you mean! I don't dare risk the lives of my officers and crew."

"But how are we going to get there?" demanded the professor. "We've just got to land on that island. My colleagues are there. They may be in trouble—they may need help."

"Besides, we have started out to get some scientific information about volcanoes and earth-

quakes, and we're going to do it. These boys are to make moving pictures, and we simply must land on that island."

"And I tell you it would be at the risk of losing my vessel if I approached any closer," declared the captain. "I dare not do it."

"Then how are we to make a landing?" asked Blake. "We can't swim with our apparatus and cameras."

"I guess not!" exclaimed Joe, grimly. "The films would spoil, to say nothing of the cameras and other things."

They were now headed away from the island, moving slowly, and a look back showed that the volcano was still in action, though the cloud of smoke was less now, and no flames could be seen.

"It goes by fits and starts," explained the professor. "A certain amount of gases accumulate, and have to find an opening. Then they burst out, with flame and smoke, and showers of ashes, while the lava—or melted, red-hot rock—runs down the sides of the mountain."

"Speaking of ashes, here comes some now!" exclaimed Blake, as a fine dust sifted down out of the air. It soon increased and the air became hazy with it, while it could almost be tasted as one breathed, and it got up one's nose. The sulphur smell also grew stronger.

"Well, what's to be done?" finally asked the professor, who had finished making notes of the distant eruption. "We have to go ashore."

"I'm sorry," said the captain; "but I don't see how it is to be done. I can't risk my vessel."

"Then we'll have to go back to Martinique, and see if we can get some kind of a craft there," declared Blake. "A motor boat, if it was large enough, would answer. It isn't much of a trip, and if we could hit on a time when there would be no tidal waves we would be all right."

"Then let's do it!" cried the professor. "We have to get on that island, and, if necessary, I'll buy some sort of a craft in Martinique. The government will authorize that, I'm sure. It's the only thing to do."

"I guess so," agreed Captain Wilson. "We'll put back to the safer island, and I'll do my best to help you get another craft. A small one will run less risk than a large one."

Soon they were speeding away from San Locas, and in due season they were back again in the harbor of St. Pierre, which they had quit only a day or so before.

"Ha, my word!" exclaimed their English friend. "I thought you wouldn't make it. A volcano is too much even for an American!"

"We're going back," said Blake, quietly. "Just



as soon as we can get another craft. Would you like to come along?"

"Ah—er—I cawn't, really, dontcher know!" exclaimed the Britisher. "I'm going to sail for England soon. No earthquakes there, dontcher know."

"No; nothing so swift as that over there," said Joe, in a low voice.

Thanks to the good offices of Captain Wilson they were able to charter an old-fashioned fishing schooner. It was a good-sized, staunch vessel, and had weathered many a storm. A gasoline engine had been installed in it, and, while it could go at no very great speed, it was a roomy and seaworthy craft. The owner agreed to run it for the party—he and his man as engineer—and Joe, Blake and the professor accepted this plan.

Accordingly, their cameras and apparatus, with the reels of unexposed film, were put on board. They took some supplies and provisions with them; not much, as they were told that they could get enough to eat on the island, for there were one or two settlements where white men had gone into business.

Then, amid much commiseration on the part of the new friends they had made in Martinique, and with expressions of solicitude following them, the boys and the professor set off on their

perilous voyage. And that it was one filled with danger was a fact they did not conceal from themselves.

"I wonder if we'll find your friends there when we arrive?" asked Joe of the professor, when they had left the harbor of St. Pierre, and were slowly making their way toward San Locas.

"I hope so—I don't see why not," was the answer. "They went there to study conditions, and they would not leave until they had satisfied themselves, or until I arrived. Oh, yes, we'll find them there—and as close to the volcano, or the earthquake disturbance, as they can get."

"We didn't get close enough before," said Blake, "to see if there was anyone on the island or not."

"Oh, there must be someone there—lots of people, in fact," declared Joe. "They can't all have left."

The weather was good, and as they approached near to the volcanic island the sea remained calm, showing, so they hoped, that there had been no recent disturbances.

"Though once we get on the island I don't care how much of a rumpus there is," declared Blake. "That is, as long as the place doesn't sink in the ocean. I want to get some startling films."

"I think you will," declared the professor, with a smile.

They were two days making the trip, for the craft was not a speedy one. And all this while the sea was calm. On the morning of the third day they came in sight of the tall mountain rearing itself up in the centre of San Locas.

"It's stopped erupting!" cried Blake, as he pointed to it. And, in fact, there was not so much as a smoke wreath about the volcanic peak.

"So much the better," declared Professor Martin. "As long as it is quiet we can easily land. Once we are there it can start up again as soon as it likes. Volcanic mountains often do that."

"There's quite a crowd on shore!" exclaimed Joe, who was observing the island through a powerful glass. "And they seem to be signaling to us."

"Maybe they're warning us to keep off," suggested the owner of the little vessel.

"More likely they want us to come and take them off," declared the engineer.

"That's the way C. C. Piper would talk," declared Joe in a low voice to Blake, who nodded his head.

Nearer and nearer they came to the island. They could see the breakwater of the harbor lined

with people, mostly the dark-skinned West Indians. A few whites were to be observed.

"There's been some sort of trouble there," declared Joe, who was still looking through the glass.

"Trouble! What do you mean?" asked Blake.

"I mean that portions of the docks and sea wall have been torn away. There are big gaps in them. Maybe it was a tidal wave—or maybe the earthquake did it."

"We'll soon know," declared the professor, grimly. "Can you land us, captain?"

"Oh, yes, we can go close in. This boat doesn't draw much."

A little later they had come up alongside a dock in the protected harbor of the volcanic island. A crowd of natives and some whites hurried toward them. Joe and Blake leaped ashore.

"Well, here we are!" cried Joe.

"In earthquake land!" added Blake.

Hardly had he spoken than there came a low rumble, and the ground beneath their feet seemed to tremble, while the boys became aware of a curious sensation.

## CHAPTER VII

### AN OLD FRIEND

"WHAT is it?" cried Blake, looking in wonder, not unmixed with fear, at his chum and the professor.

"It's the volcano!" declared Joe. "See, it's pouring out a lot of smoke," and he pointed toward the big mountain that seemed to dominate the whole island.

"No, it isn't the volcano," declared the professor. "It's an earthquake. Boys, we have arrived in the nick of time! Oh, if I only had some of my instruments out—my seismograph—but they are all packed up in the boat!" and he ran back toward the small craft they had just quitted. "I can at least make some notes about the first shock we experienced," he went on, as he did some hasty scribbling in his book while he hurried forward.

"If it's an earthquake we ought to begin filming it!" cried Blake. "Joe, let's get one of the

picture machines out. We may miss a good thing."

"But what can you take?" asked Joe, looking around, while that same strange rumbling kept up, seeming to come from far down under the earth. At the same time there was a peculiar swaying motion, not unlike the heaving roll of a ship at sea.

"I declare it makes me feel a bit sick!" went on Joe. "But I don't see what you are going to take, Blake. I thought when there was an earthquake the ground would open and all sorts of things like that happen. I can't see what——"

"See that!" suddenly cried Blake, and he pointed to a row of small houses that began acting in the strangest manner. They seemed to tilt to one side, like a row of bricks about to topple. Then came a revulsion in the direction of the shock, and the buildings swayed back again, though they did not quite resume their perpendicular position.

"If we could have taken that!" cried Blake, "we'd have had a dandy film of an earthquake's effect, all right."

"Pshaw, it's too bad!" cried Joe. "Maybe we won't have another chance."

"Oh, yes, you will, young man. Don't worry about that," spoke a voice at their side, and turn-

ing, they saw one of the few white men who had advanced to meet them with the natives. He spoke with an English accent.

"Do you think there will be more earthquakes?" asked Blake, eagerly.

"More earthquakes! I should say so!" cried the Englishman. "That's all we've been having for the last three weeks, and volcanic blow-outs, too. This island is doomed, I say. My word! I'd have been away from here long ago if I could have closed up my business. I'm going to leave now, no matter how much I lose. I'll take the first steamer. I don't understand why one hasn't called before this."

"You'll get no more steamers here!" declared another man. "They won't venture in with the danger of a tidal wave to swamp them any moment, besides the danger of an earthquake. No steamers will call in this neighborhood until this island either is destroyed or until these disturbances are all over. Me for that small boat these gentlemen came in. I say!" he called to the captain, "how much for a passage to St. Pierre, Martinique?"

"I'll buy the boat from you!" put in another man. "What will you sell for?" and both made a rush for the small craft, followed by a number of



other whites, and several of the better class of natives.

"Say, they've got the rush, all right!" cried Joe.

"They sure are anxious to get away," agreed Blake. "And the earthquake has almost stopped, too."

This was a fact, there being only a distant rumble now, while there was no perceptible motion to the earth.

"No use trying for a moving picture now," said Joe, regretfully.

"This is the way it's been right along," put in another white man. "Just a few little rumbles and shakes, and then it stops. But they keep on increasing in frequency and severity, and it is only a question of a little while when they'll get so bad that they'll split this island."

"Then I hope we're on the larger part when she does split," remarked Blake, grimly. "But come on, Joe; if the captain is going to sell his boat we want to get our stuff out of it."

"And that's another thing to think of," put in Joe. "If the steamers have stopped calling here, as we know they must have from what that man said, and from the conduct of Captain Wilson of the *Indian Prince*, we may never be able to get

off this island. Maybe we'd better bargain for that boat ourselves, and keep it here."

"That's right," agreed Blake. "We'll speak to the professor about it."

They hurried back to the craft, around the captain of which were grouped a number of the residents of San Locas, all talking at once, and trying to make some agreement to be taken to some more secure spot.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, gentlemen," said the captain. "I'll not sell you my boat, as so many of you want her. But I'll take as many as I can to St. Pierre, and come back again for the rest of you. I don't anticipate that anything much is going to happen. And, if it does, it won't be for some time. You can draw lots to see who will be the first to go."

"The women and children ought to go first," said the Englishman.

"There are not many left," spoke another man. "I sent my wife and family away a month ago, when I first heard the rumblings and saw smoke at the top of the mountain. A lot of my friends did the same thing, too. But I agree with you that the women and children ought to be taken away first. They won't take up much room."

"A good idea," said the captain. "I'll get

aboard some provisions, and be ready to sail tomorrow."

"But what about us?" put in Professor Martin, who had ceased taking notes, and was now anxious to get his scientific instruments. "What will happen if we should want to leave this island when you aren't here?" and he looked at the captain.

"Aren't there any other vessels on this island?" the skipper inquired.

"Only a few fishing boats," said the Englishman. "They are small, and aren't seaworthy. I wouldn't trust myself in one."

"But when it comes to a pinch we may have to," declared Blake.

"Wait, I'll tell you something," put in the captain. "Of course you scientific and moving picture gentlemen engaged me to bring you here, and take you away again—no time being set for the last. And, of course, I'm in duty bound to stick by you, and I will. But if these other folks feel that they want to get away I hate to disoblige them. So I don't see how——"

"This will be a way out," spoke Professor Martin. "You take away as many boat loads as you can. We'll take our chance. And, after you've taken away all who want to go, then you can keep your boat here for our use. Also, if

you happen to be at St. Pierre, and hear of some terrible disturbance here, we would like to have you come for us as fast as you can, or send someone."

"I'll do that, all right," declared the captain. "Now, then, gentlemen, as long as that is settled, get the women and children together, and decide which of you are to go first."

"Oh, I don't believe I'll desert," said one man. "If the lads and the professor are going to stick just to get some scientific data, I guess I can stand it. I hate to give up my business here."

"So do I," declared another, and the tide thus being turned, a number made up their minds to stay. Quite a number, however, said they were going to leave as soon as possible.

"Well, it's up to us to stay," said Joe. "So I guess we might as well get our stuff out of the boat, Blake."

"That's right. And have a moving picture camera ready so we won't miss another chance like that a little while ago," added his chum. The professor was already at work unloading his instruments, with the aid of the captain.

"And we'd better look up a place to stay," said Blake, when most of their baggage was ashore. "I wonder what sort of an eating joint we can strike?"

"There's a hotel here," put in the captain. "There's only one on the island. It isn't a very large place. This town, or city, of Salina is the only settlement of any account. It used to be the stopping place for some tourists, but of late years they have given up coming here, as there wasn't much to see. Outside of Salina there are only a few native settlements, and some coffee and cotton plantations—none very large. You had better go to the hotel."

"We will," decided Professor Martin. "Boys, I'll foot all the bills, you know, as you are under my charge. It will come out of Uncle Sam's pocket eventually. Now, then, for the hotel, and after we have a meal, and get our belongings in shape, I must look up my friends, and arrange to do the work we came for."

"I wonder if your friends are here?" ventured Joe.

"Did a party of scientists come here some time ago?" asked Blake, turning to one of the men who had decided not to leave.

"Yes," was the answer. "They came to study the earthquakes and the volcano, same as you did."

"Where are they?" asked Mr. Martin, eagerly.

"Oh, it's hard to say. They were continually making trips off into the interior, or up the side

of Mt. Regi—that's where the volcano is," he added, waving his hand toward it. "They were always on the go."

"Then doubtless we shall soon meet them," said the professor. "Come on, boys. There is no telling when we may get another shock."

"That's right," moodily remarked their informant. "But I'll give you a hand," he added, "and help you carry some of your stuff. I'll also show you the way to the hotel. It isn't much of a place, but it's the best there is, and as safe as any. In fact, it is one of the few buildings here built to withstand earthquake shocks, though, of course, a severe one would probably bring it tumbling down."

"I am interested in that," said the professor. "I mean, in how the building is constructed. I'll devote some study to it."

They walked on toward the hotel, several of the natives volunteering their services as porters. As they advanced the boys took observations of the volcano. The smoke had lessened now, and there seemed to be no immediate danger.

"It's queer we don't smell the sulphur as plainly as we did when at sea," remarked Blake.

"That's because the crater is so high in the air," explained Mr. Martin. "It acts like a tall chimney and carries off the fumes. But, when

they have floated some distance off, the wind currents take them toward the earth and we get them."

The hotel was located on a high bluff, overlooking the sea, and Blake found himself wondering if there was any danger of the structure toppling into the ocean during an earthquake.

"But I mustn't get into C. C.'s habit," he told himself. "I suppose if he was here he'd have nervous prostration. I wonder what has become of him?"

From the hotel veranda a good view could be had, both of the volcano and of the island itself. The place seemed but a mere dot in the ocean, though the boys learned that it was several miles long and not quite so wide. Off in the distance they could make out some native settlements, and a few plantations. But the hotel seemed deserted.

"It doesn't look as though they did much business," remarked Blake, in a low voice, as they entered the office.

"I hope they have something to eat," answered Joe.

"And I hope I find my friends here," said the scientist. "They would most likely make this their headquarters. I'll ask the clerk," and he did, mentioning his fellow-scientists' names.



"Yes; they are registered here," was the answer; "but they have not been in for nearly a week. They started off on some expedition, as they called it, and have not returned."

"Ah, doubtless they found some very interesting scientific material to work on," spoke Mr. Martin. "Well, we must get to work ourselves, boys. We will meet the others soon, I hope."

The clerk assigned them to their rooms and stated that a meal would soon be ready.

"I can't promise you much, though," he warned them. "Most of our help deserted at the first sign of trouble, and it is difficult to get supplies."

The boys and the professor promised not to be over-particular, and started for their apartments. As they walked along the corridor they passed a room, the door of which was open. And from that room came a voice that startled the two boys.

"I might have known it!" someone was saying. "I get all ready for a vacation—pick out the most lonesome spot I can find on the map, within reasonable distance—fix everything so I won't be bothered—and what happens? I run slam-bang right upon an earthquake island! This building is likely to topple down on me at any time. It's just my luck! If there's any danger I'm sure to be there. That's little old C. C. Piper to a dot!"

For a moment Blake and Joe looked one at the other.

"Did you hear that?" finally whispered Joe.

"I should say I did. It's our old friend!"

"C. C. Piper—old Gloomy Gus—as sure as you're a foot high!" exclaimed Joe, as together they started toward the room whence the voice had come.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE MISSING SCIENTISTS

"WELL, for the love of—wait—hold on! Is it really you or am I dreaming? Can it be possible that I behold you in the living flesh?"

C. C. Piper started to his feet as Blake and Joe entered his room, and stared at them wonderingly. He even turned a bit pale, but otherwise had not changed any since they saw him last. His room was in confusion, as though he had been hastily packing up.

"Hello, C. C.!" called Blake. "Aren't you glad to see us?"

"Glad! I never was more glad in my life to see anyone. But I don't understand. How did you get here? Did you know I had come to this terrible place? Have you come to take me off? I know I'll fall down into some crack in the earth, or else the volcano will bury me with lava!" But even while he was making these direful predictions Mr. Piper began to whistle a jolly little tune.

He was his same old self; the change that had taken place during the trip to the jungle, when he was temporarily an optimist instead of a pessimist, had not been lasting.

"No; we didn't come to rescue you," spoke Joe.

"We came to get moving pictures," went on Blake. "But how in the world did you get here?"

"I came here on my vacation," was the answer.

"Your vacation!" chorused both boys.

"Yes. After we got back from Africa I felt that I needed a rest. I decided not to take up acting again right away, and I picked out what I thought would be a nice, quiet spot. I didn't want to be bothered with theatrical agents, and the like. I just wanted to be where I could be by myself and enjoy nature—a quiet spot.

"But, oh, my!" cried the comedian. "I never saw such luck as follows me! No sooner had I landed, a few days ago, than there was an earthquake. And about an hour afterward the volcano began to do stunts."

"Didn't you know that there was trouble down here when you headed for it?" asked Blake.

"It was in the papers," added Joe.

"I didn't read the papers," answered Mr. Piper. "I wanted to forget all about everything."

"But didn't you hear about it aboard the ship?" asked Blake.

"I didn't talk to a single soul aboard the ship," was the somewhat surprising answer. "I was seasick most of the time, anyhow, just as I was at the start of the African trip. So I kept to my room. I was so glad when we got near this place that I believe I'd have landed even if I had known of the 'quakes. I wanted to get on some kind of land.

"I was the only passenger to get off, and I thought the others looked at me sort of curiously. But I didn't think anything of it at the time. Then came the shocks and—well, I realized that I was up against it good and proper. It's C. C. Piper's luck right over again."

"But, if you didn't like it, why didn't you go back on the same steamer?" asked Joe.

"I would if I'd had the chance," was the answer; "but the vessel got off again too quickly for me. And I haven't been able to get away since."

"There's a boat going now," put in Blake, remembering their own craft. "You might get in that."

"Are you boys going to stay?" asked the comedian.

"Sure; until we get some moving pictures," declared Joe.

"That settles it. Then I stay, too!" cried C. C. "You can't stump me! I'll stick it out and help you if I can; but I know something dreadful will happen to me. Probably I'll fall into the volcano," and even while making this gloomy prediction Mr. Piper was screwing his face up into some of his odd characterizations.

"Oh, maybe things won't be so bad," said Blake, encouragingly.

"Well, I like that!" cried Joe. "Don't we want 'em as bad as they can be, with safety? Otherwise what's the use of coming here to make pictures?"

"That's so," agreed his chum. "It's a queer sort of proposition."

"Well, you boys are always running up against something like that," said C. C. "But as long as you're here I won't mind it so much. Are you alone?"

"No," answered Blake, and then they told how they happened to come to San Locas, mentioning Professor Martin. A little later they introduced the comedian to the scientist, and soon all four were sitting down to a fairly good meal.

"Now to get the cameras in shape!" cried Blake, a little later.

"Yes," said Joe, "we don't want to be caught napping."

It did not take long to put their three pieces of apparatus in trim for making moving pictures. Then they decided to take a trip out to the volcano, as even then it was smoking slightly, and might break into eruption at any time.

"And when it does, it will make a fine picture," said Blake.

"And I can make some scientific observations," declared the professor.

C. C. Piper volunteered to accompany the party, and a little later they set out in two bullock carts, there being no horses on the island.

"It's a stiff climb," remarked Joe, when they had reached the base of the volcano and began going up the trail.

"And we may come sliding down in a hurry if some red-hot lava begins to pour out," said Mr. Piper, with his usual gloominess.

"We will have to take our chance," said the professor, grimly.

When within about two miles of the top the ascent became so difficult for the bullocks that the carts were abandoned, the drivers being told to await the return of the party. Then they continued their journey on foot, carrying the cameras and the instruments.



They had gone on but about a mile farther when the ground suddenly began to tremble.

"An earthquake!" cried Blake. "We're in for it," and he caught at a nearby tree.

"That isn't an earthquake!" declared the professor. "It comes from inside this mountain. Boys, I believe she's going to erupt. We had better not go any closer. I'll set up my instruments here."

"And we'll set up a camera!" cried Blake. "Come on, Joe!"

Hardly had he spoken than the rumbling increased. Then followed an explosion, like that of some great gun, and the earth shook.

Quickly the moving picture boys arranged their camera. Fortunately they were on a ledge, whence a good view could be obtained of the summit of Mt. Regi. The camera was pointed at it, focused, and Blake began turning the handle. With a series of clicks the sensitized film began slipping along back of the lens, and the shutter began to open and close at the rate of sixteen times a second.

"Look at that!" cried C. C., pointing to the top of the mountain. "That's the worst I ever saw!"

From the crater opening there suddenly shot a great mass of smoke. It was dense and black, as near like that from a burning oil tank as any-

thing else. And interlaced through it, playing about the edges, and up through the centre, were streaks of red flame.

"Oh, if we only had the taking of pictures in color down a little finer, so it would be more successful, what a film we'd have!" cried Blake, as he ground away at the handle.

"This will do pretty well!" exclaimed Joe, who was holding the tripod, since the vibration of the earth made it anything but steady.

Mr. Piper was assisting the professor with his instruments, and thus the volcano was being made to add its share to the advancement of science.

"It isn't as dangerous as I thought," said Blake.

"No; fortunately the wind is carrying the smoke and ashes, as well as the sulphur fumes, away from us," said the scientist. "If it shifts, though, we'll probably have to leave."

The scene was now one of awful splendor. At night it would have been more spectacular, but, of course, after dark no moving pictures could be taken, except by using a continuous flash-light, and this is not always successful, though the boys had made some animal pictures that way in Africa.

Up spouted the flames and smoke. The volcano seemed to be outdoing itself. The rumbling

and tremors of the earth increased, and there were continual explosions in the interior, sounding like an artillery bombardment.

"I only hope it doesn't blow apart," remarked C. C., with charming disregard for the nerves of his friends. However, they were not easily frightened.

The boys continued to make pictures, getting what afterward proved to be a rare and valuable film. And the professor kept at his instruments, making various observations that would afterward be of use to scientists.

"There goes that plaguey film!" cried Blake, as it broke inside the camera.

"I'll help mend it!" said Joe, and together they labored at joining the severed ends of the delicate strip of celluloid.

Suddenly there came a most tremendous explosion. It seemed as if the very mountain would split open. The moving picture camera was toppled over and everyone in the party was knocked down.

As Professor Martin leaped to his feet he cried out:

"Come on, boys! Here comes the lava," and he pointed toward the summit. Through what seemed like a gash newly made in the rim of the

crater a stream of red-hot, melted rock poured in the direction of our friends.

"Grab the camera, Joe!" cried Blake. "And shut it up, so there won't be any danger of the film getting light-struck."

"More danger of it being melted," declared C. C. Piper, as he helped gather up the professor's instruments.

Together they started down the slope, running with all their speed. But they need not have been so alarmed. For in the path of the lava was a deep gully, and far enough off from our friends, so they were in no danger.

Into this depression poured the melted stone, and when the hot stuff ran into a stream of water at the bottom, a great cloud of steam arose—the water, in fact, being entirely evaporated.

"Let's stay here and finish that film," proposed Joe, as it was seen that the lava could not reach them.

"All right," agreed Blake, and the strip having been mended they resumed the taking of views. But that one big explosion seemed to put an end to operations for the time being. The smoke and flames began to subside, and soon no more lava flowed, though that in the gully remained hot for a long time.

"Well, we may as well get back to the hotel,"

suggested Joe, when they had used up all the film they had with them.

"We may strike an earthquake on our way," suggested C. C. "If we do, probably we'll all fall in some crack."

"Cheerful; isn't he?" asked Blake of the professor, who nodded and smiled.

Their bullock carts were where they had left them, but the drivers had fled, evidently frightened by the eruption. But the boys made a shift to drive the patient animals to the hotel.

There they found considerable excitement. Several who had decided to remain on the island were now trying to get passage on the small boat.

"I don't see what can have become of my friends, the other professors," said Mr. Martin that night. "They have been away several days now, and there is no word from them."

"They expected to be away a long time," said the hotel clerk. "They took considerable food and supplies with them."

"That's all well enough," declared the scientist; "but they should come back. They know I am here by now. They were to meet me. I don't like it," and his face wore a worried look.

"Do you think anything could have happened to them?" asked Joe.

"That's what is puzzling me," was the answer.

"It is not like them to stay away so long and not leave any word for me, or even send word back. I confess I don't like it," and he began pacing up and down the room.

"Perhaps they have fallen into——" began C. C.—and then he stopped, for he realized that the gloomy prediction that had been on his lips was rather out of place.

"Of course an accident is possible," admitted Mr. Martin; "but I don't like to think of it. If they don't return within a few days I will make some inquiries and try to get on their trail. I don't like them to be missing so long."

## CHAPTER IX

### SEEKING THE PROFESSORS

"DID you feel that shock, Joe?"

"I sure did, Blake. Let's get up. If this hotel is going to tumble down I want to be outside."

"That's right. There goes C. C.!"

It was their first night in earthquake land, and they had been sleeping some time when a tremor of the building awakened the boys, who had communicating rooms.

"I knew it would happen! I knew I'd never get a decent night's sleep!" cried the comedian from a room across the hall. "I'd like to get hold of the man who invented earthquakes and maroon him on this island."

Blake and Joe had jumped out of bed and stood in the middle of the floor. For a moment they did not know what to do.

"It doesn't seem to be a very severe shock," spoke Joe, after a bit.

"No, it isn't much more than as if a heavy freight train passed the house."



The hotel was in confusion, however, the few guests it contained, in addition to our friends, having been awakened and alarmed. Lights were set aglow, and people began hurrying out.

"I guess there isn't much danger," said Professor Martin, coming to the door of the boys' room. "It is only a slight shock. I am beginning to believe that this island is like some parts of Japan, where they have little earthquake shocks every hour or so. The people there don't mind them in the least."

"Do you think they will *all* be slight shocks?" asked C. C. as he came in, with some of his clothes over one arm, and carrying two valises. "Aren't we likely to get a bad one some day, that will put everything out of business?"

"Well, of course, we *may*," admitted the scientist. "But I think, from what I have read and observed of earthquakes, that this tremor was only a passing one, and we may as well go back to bed."

"I'll never go to sleep again," declared C. C., but snores coming from his room a little later announced that he was not so good a prophet as he thought. Gradually the excitement quieted down, and the hotel was again calm.

The morning was so fair, with the sun shining on the blue sea, that no one would have dreamed

that the island was likely to be destroyed any moment by an earthquake or volcanic eruption. But those who had decided to leave in the boat that brought the boys and the professor did not care to remain, and started for Martinique.

Mt. Regi showed no signs of the disturbance of the afternoon before, and all that day there was not the slightest tremor. The boys took no moving pictures, but spent some time in readjusting the feed sprocket wheels of the camera in which the film had broken.

"It is out of gear," said Blake, after an observation; "and we don't want any accidents to happen at critical times. So we'll fix it while we have the chance."

Mr. Martin made several inquiries that day concerning his friends, the other professors. The hotel clerk could give very little information, however. All he knew was that they had organized themselves into an expedition one day and started off, with some natives, to explore the volcano.

"They said they would not be back for some time," he added. "At least, not for a day or two."

"And now it's more than a week," declared the scientist. "I am sure something is wrong. We

must start to hunt them up if they do not arrive by to-morrow or next day."

But to-morrow came, with no sign of the missing men. The professor would have started out at once to look for them, but there was quite a severe shock, and, as it produced several large openings in the earth's surface, the scientist wanted to make some observations of it, and the boys took pictures.

Fortunately the disturbance was local, and in a part of the island where there were only a few houses. These were deserted by the native owners in time to escape being hurt. The ruins made a fine film, however.

"What makes earthquakes, anyhow?" asked C. C. Piper, who was continually with his friends.

"Different causes," spoke Blake, who had been reading up on the subject, and also asking questions of the professor. "Sometimes volcanoes cause them, and sometimes a disturbance in the interior of the earth."

"But what makes a volcano shoot?" asked the comedian.

"An accumulation of burning gases causes the eruption," explained the professor. "It is generally believed that the interior of the earth is a molten mass. Sometimes the fire is far below the surface, and sometimes comparatively close.

Such is the case with volcanoes. They are the chimneys, or vents, for the escape of the accumulated gases, which explode, and cause a fire that melts solid rock. Hence the lava and the ashes.

"Earthquakes may be caused by a settling of some part of the earth's surface, due to the fact that some solid part is burned away. The crust falls in, causing tremblings and great cracks. Or, some believe, great masses of rocks in the interior of the earth shift their position, from some unknown cause, causing a shake-up. These are only general theories. Of course, each scientist has his own.

"But I am anxious to find my colleagues and get the results of their observations. They will be most valuable. I wonder what is keeping them away?"

"Why not look up some of the friends of the natives who went on this trip with them?" suggested Blake. "If the natives who acted as guides and porters have returned, why——"

"It looks bad for the professors!" interrupted C. C.

"How so?" asked Joe.

"Why, maybe the natives are cannibals and have——"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Professor Martin. "The West Indians are not at all like that. No,

there is probably some good explanation why my friends have not returned. But I will admit I am anxious."

There were no disturbances the next day, nor did the volcano erupt. Accordingly, no word having come from the missing scientists, the boys, the professor and C. C. Piper set out in search of them.

The scientific men from Washington had become fairly well known on the island during their short stay. It was easy to find several natives, as well as white men, who had seen them start out on what seemed to be their main expedition to the volcano.

"They had stuff enough for several days, according to my notion," said one man.

"That would be like Professor Bristol," said Mr. Martin. "He is a great eater, and was always afraid of not having food enough."

It was also comparatively easy to find friends of the natives who had accompanied the scientists. But it was not so easy to find any of these same porters or guides. An extensive inquiry showed that none of them had come back.

"That's rather queer," said Blake.

"It is," agreed Joe. "What can have happened?"

"Wouldn't they be likely to stay with the professors?" asked C. C. Piper.

"Well, if they acted anything like our bullock cart drivers did, those natives would desert at the first alarm," said Mr. Martin. "Of course, they may have stayed with my friends, but the further I go into this the less I like it. It has a queer look to me."

The boys thought the same thing, but could offer no suggestions. Inquiries were made at the homes of all the natives who had acted as guides. None was at his house, and at some of the places only deserted buildings were found, for the rest of the family had fled from the earth-racked island.

"Well, there's one place we haven't inquired yet," said Mr. Martin, as he consulted a list he had made. "That's at the house of Harshi, the porter last selected by my friends. We will go see if he has come back."

## CHAPTER X

### THE STRANGE STORY

INQUIRIES made from several sources had brought forth the information about Harshi. It appeared that he was rather a simple native, good and kind, but not much to be depended on.

Professor Bristol, the leader of the scientists who had preceded Professor Martin to San Locas, had, according to the stories told by the families of the native porters, engaged all the men he needed. At the last moment Harshi had appealed to be given a place, and told such a story of needing the money for his family that he was hired, though really not needed nor of much account.

"But we may as well find out what his family know of his whereabouts," decided Professor Martin. "He may have come back, or have sent some word."

"Do you think that possible, when none of the other porters did so?" asked Blake.



"Anything is possible," declared the scientist; "and in the present situation we must neglect nothing. I am much worried about my friends. We will inquire at the house of Harshi."

"But I can't see what good it will do," declared C. C. "Even if he has come back he'll probably say that your friends have all been swallowed up in some earthquake, or have fallen into the volcano."

Professor Martin stared at the speaker.

"I must say," he remarked a bit stiffly, "that you are not very encouraging."

"I beg your pardon," responded the comedian; "but I believe in looking on the dark side of things."

"Why such a strange attitude?"

"Because if matters turn out all right you feel much better than if you anticipated good news and are met with bad. It's a habit I have."

"I see," replied the scientist; "but I can't quite agree with you. I believe in looking on the bright side. It is much more comforting, and then, if you do have bad news, your hopes buoy you up enough to stand it."

"But do you really believe we shall hear some news at this house?" asked Joe. "We received no word at all at the homes of the other porters."

"It is a last hope, and we must make use of it,"

decided the professor. "It is true that none of the other porters have been heard from since starting out with my friends. Perhaps it is true, as some have said, that they deserted at the first sign of danger, and are afraid to come back to Salina because of some action that might be taken against them. Perhaps they may all be in hiding, waiting for the return of my friends, when they will explain their actions.

"Whether that is so or not, the fact remains that none of the porters has been heard from. We have visited the homes of all the others, so why not call on Harshi's wife, if he has one. Being a weak and uncertain sort of a man, he may have come home when the others, after deserting, did not."

"Well, I suppose that is the right way to look at it," admitted C. C. "Go ahead, and we'll be with you."

Harshi lived some distance out of the town of Salina, and, as they were to go in bullock carts, Joe and Blake decided to each take a moving picture camera in order to "film" anything that might occur.

"We're not going in the direction of the volcano," remarked Blake; "but an earthquake may happen any time and place on this island. We want to be ready for it."

"That's right," agreed Joe; and so they set out.

There had been a period of calm for two days, there being such slight shocks that no one minded them. And they did not cause enough disturbance to make the taking of pictures worth while.

"If we stay here long enough," remarked Blake, "we'll get so used to the shocks that it will take a heavy one to make us awaken."

The volcano, after that one big eruption, seemed to quiet down. There was no more than a faint haze of smoke above the crater, and no fire could be seen at night. There were no rumblings, even.

"Maybe it's burned out," suggested Blake.

"No; I think not," was the opinion of Professor Martin. "It is merely accumulating enough gases and vapors to make another big eruption. It's like a head of steam in a boiler. As soon as it gets up enough pressure the safety valve blows off, or if that is clogged, the boiler bursts. In a way the volcanoes are the safety valves of the earth. If the flames, smoke and powerful gases did not spout out through them, the whole world, in time, might burst apart."

"It probably will happen some day," observed Mr. Piper, calmly, as he whistled a few bars of a popular song.

"I—I beg of you to keep such pessimistic reflections to yourself—at least when I am along," said Professor Martin, and the comedian laughingly agreed to try.

Harshi's house was a humble hut on the edge of a little plantation. The way was pointed out by several natives, as our friends inquired.

"And now to see if he is home," remarked Mr. Martin, as he tapped on the door. It was opened at once, and, looking in, the boys and their companions saw a man and woman of the West Indian type, the man seated at a table calmly eating.

"Is Harshi here?" asked the professor.

"Me Harshi," was the unexpected answer.

"What!" cried Blake. "Are you one of the porters who went with the white men to the volcano?"

"Me go," was the still quiet answer, as the man went on eating.

"Well, for the love of goodness!" cried Joe. "Here we've been hunting all over for some news, or for a sign of the men who went with the scientists, and this chap has been here all the while!"

"That's right," agreed Blake. "When did you come back?" he asked the man.

"'Bout week ago."

"Then he must have deserted right after the first big eruption!" exclaimed the professor.

"But tell us, Harshi, where are the others? Where are my friends? Where are the other porters—your friends? Tell us that. Did they come back?"

"We all go to fire mountain," went on the man. "Me go last, not so strong, and me carry little thing. I show you."

"Oh, get on with the story!" cried the professor. "You can show us later."

"All right—me show. We all go to fire mountain. There big hole—what you call cave—white mens go in—black mens go in—all go in but Harshi. Me last in line, you know."

"Yes, we know. Go on!" exclaimed Joe.

"There's been something doing, I can see that," murmured Mr. Piper, as though to vindicate himself.

"All go in cave," proceeded Harshi. "I stay out with little thing I carry. All go in—then come—boom! Big noise. Mountain spit fire and smoke—cave all gone—me run home!"

## CHAPTER XI

### OFF ON A TRAIL

SCARCELY able to comprehend what the man meant, the boys, the professor and C. C. Piper stared at one another, a great fear taking possession of them. Mr. Martin was the first to speak.

"Do you mean to say, Harshi," he asked, "that all my friends went into some cave on the fire mountain, as you call it—they all went in, followed by your friends, the porters, and you stayed out?"

"Me stay out," replied the Indian, simply.

"But what happened?" asked Blake. "I don't exactly understand."

"There was an explosion, and the cave was destroyed—that's the explanation," said Mr. Piper.

"That it!" exclaimed Harshi eagerly, glad that some one understood him. "Cave all close up when big noise came in fire mountain."

"How is it you weren't caught in it?" asked Joe. "Did you manage to run out in time?"

"Me no go in," explained the man. "Me last one in line, and when rest come to cave me no git there yet. Me no walk fast—me carry—I show," and interrupting himself he went to another room, and brought out a scientific instrument.

"Me carry this," he went on. "When cave all close up, and no more white mans—no more black mans—me run home and bring this."

"Part of Professor Bristol's seismograph!" exclaimed Mr. Martin. "I would know it anywhere. Oh, this is terrible! All my friends destroyed—and all the poor porters! Oh, what a calamity! It is awful!"

"How could it have happened?" murmured Blake.

"They must have gone in the cave to observe some phenomenon," said Professor Martin. "Perhaps to investigate one of the smaller craters of the volcano. Then came an explosion, and the cave was closed up, imprisoning them there. What a loss to the world! My poor friends!" and he was quite overcome.

"Harshi was lucky," commented Joe, after a pause. "He was at the tag end, and didn't get caught."



"And to think that he knew this all the while, and we never thought to call on him," added Blake. "Here we've been wasting time, when we might have been trying to rescue the men and the porters."

"Not much use to try and save them," spoke C. C. "If they're caught inside a volcanic cave there's not much left of them by this time."

"We'll try, at any rate!" declared Professor Martin, stoutly. "There may be a bare possibility of their being alive. If miners can live entombed under the earth for a week or more, perhaps my friends can do the same. We must locate this cave, and try to dig them out."

"If the volcano will let us!" exclaimed Mr. Piper.

"Sir, I wish you would forego those pessimistic remarks of yours," spoke Mr. Martin. "They make me nervous."

"I beg your pardon!" exclaimed the actor. "I'll try; but I am so out of patience with myself for coming to such a place as this island that I don't know what to do or say. Of course, I'll help you search for your friends, and, as you say, they may still be alive, but——"

"Hurray! C. C. is getting into his African habit!" cried Joe, recalling the search for his

sister, when the comedian was the most cheerful one of the party.

"Where on the mountain is this cave located?" asked Professor Martin. "Can you take us to it, Harshi?"

"Yes, me can take, but no can find it."

"Why not?" Blake wanted to know.

"All covered up. Big rocks fall on it—close it up."

"But can't you show us the place where it was—and where it may still be?" asked Joe.

Harshi shrugged his shoulders as if in doubt.

"No can tell—me try," he said, simply.

"Then let's start as soon as possible!" cried the professor. "All else must give way to the finding of my friends. Every moment is valuable. Harshi, from now on, you are engaged by me to help in this search. Boys——"

"You can count on us to the last minute!" cried Blake, and Joe nodded his acquiescence.

"The same here," added C. C. Piper, laconically. "And maybe we'll find 'em!"

"Hurray!" cried Joe. "You're not so bad, after all, Mr. C. C."

Harshi was very willing to be hired by the white party. Professor Martin took charge of his fellow savant's instrument, and they all went

back to the hotel, Harshi's wife arranging to stay with relatives until her husband's return.

"For we may be gone several days," explained Mr. Martin. "I am not going to give up this search until I find my friends or——"

He did not finish the sentence, but all knew what he meant.

An endeavor was made to hire other Indians as helpers on the search, but, somehow, the story of the failure of the other black men to return had spread, and not a native would volunteer, even for double the usual wages.

"They 'fraid mountain fall on them," said Harshi, simply. "Me git one man, though."

"Then get him!" cried the professor in desperation. "We need help in this search."

Harshi went off, and soon came back with a man whom he introduced as Moduk, saying he was a cousin. Moduk was a fine specimen of the West Indian native, tall and strong, and, seemingly, fearless.

"He'll do!" cried Blake.

"He's like some of those Masai warriors, who hunted the lion in Africa with only their spears," added Joe. "Do you remember when we filmed that, Blake?"

"I should say I did. And we're likely to get a chance to film something just as good now."

"Oh, are you going to take the cameras along?"

"Certainly. Why not? We'll do our share of the rescue, and get what pictures we can. There'll probably be eruptions and earthquakes every now and then, and we'll want to get pictures of them for the government."

Professor Martin agreed with this view, and the cameras were made ready. It was too late that day to do anything toward the search for the missing scientists, though all were eager to begin. But there were some preparations to make.

There was a slight earthquake shock that night, and the volcano became active, but no pictures could be made. The next morning the boat in which our friends had come to San Locas returned for a new supply of passengers, and found more than could be accommodated.

"You gentlemen have the first choice," said the captain, to the moving picture boys and their friends. "Do you want to go to St. Pierre?"

"No, indeed!" cried Joe.

"We're going to stick until we rescue the professor's friends," declared Blake. Then as many as could be taken engaged passage from what they believed was an ill-fated island.

"Well, we may as well start," remarked Blake, when they had hired two large bullock carts, which Harshi and his cousin Moduk were to drive. The vehicles held the passengers, as well as their supplies, food and the cameras.

"Yes, let's hike!" spoke Joe.

"And we'll bring back those scientists!" declared C. C. At which Blake and Joe both congratulated him on making a brave effort to get over his pessimism.

Enough food was taken to enable the party to remain out for a week or more, and there were several light shelter tents, though in that warm climate little was needed save as a protection against the dew.

"And if we're on the volcano mountain, we'll be warm enough, with the big fire burning inside," added Blake.

Thus they started off. They felt that it was almost a forlorn hope, but they would not give up until the very end. The missing scientists and their porters might still be alive, somewhere in the interior of the mountain.

## CHAPTER XII

### A TERRIFIC SHOCK

"WELL, Joe, this doesn't look much like earthquake land; does it?" asked Blake, as he sat beside his chum in one of the bullock carts.

"That's right, Blake. It's almost as calm and peaceful as sometimes when we were on safari in Africa."

"You mean when the elephants weren't charging us, or a rhino trying to see how near he could come to us with his horns, or when we weren't being eaten up by ticks and jiggers. Is that it, Joe?"

"Just about, Blake."

"Still, with all that, it is rather peaceful just at present," went on Blake. "Though, of course, there is no telling when something may break loose."

Indeed, the boys had spoken correctly, for nature seemed at her best this day, when the party had set out to try and locate, if possible,

the buried cave where the scientists were imprisoned with their porters.

The sun was shining, there was a gentle breeze that made traveling a delight, and off in the distance the blue sea sparkled. Since the earthquake shock in the night, and the minor eruption of the volcano, there had been no disturbances.

And, as our friends, with the two natives, made their way toward the mountain of fire, they hoped that nature would not produce any of her "star stunts," as Joe called them, until after they had, at least, rescued the scientists.

True, the boys, as did Professor Martin, wished to get pictures of the "stunts" as they came off, and Mr. Martin wanted to take accurate observations. Joe and Blake, of course, had their cameras—the two hand machines, as well as the one that worked by the compressed air motor contained in it.

Food for a stay of a week or more was taken, as I have said, together with picks and shovels, and a small quantity of blasting powder; for it was thought that it might be possible to blow away some of the rocks that had fallen and closed the mouth of the cave.

"Though it's got to be very carefully done,"



said Professor Martin, who had made a study of explosives, and was an expert in their use.

The location of the cave, into which he had seen the scientists disappear, and which had, a moment later, been sealed up by the forces of nature, was, according to Harshi, on the side of the mountain farthest removed from the town of Salina. It was on the slope toward the sea, though somewhat in from the coast, and the approach to it was easier than the one attempted by the boys the time they made their first moving pictures of Mt. Regi in eruption.

"We won't make the mountain by night," remarked Blake, as the bullock carts made their slow way along. "That side of it is too far off."

"That's right," agreed his chum. "We'll have to camp at the foot of it, I guess."

Indeed, by the best route they could take, which was in this case also the shortest, they could not hope to get to the vicinity of the cave that day. Professor Martin, impatient as he was, recognized this, and decided not to force the animals to their limit.

Every one wanted to get at the work of rescue as soon as possible, but they realized that they must conserve their energies so as to do their best work when the time came.

As the bullock carts moved slowly along

Blake operated one of the hand-manipulated cameras, getting views along the way. These could be worked in with the films showing the volcano and earthquake scenes, when the pictures were released for public exhibition. That had been one of the stipulations made when the boys consented to act for the government, as they realized how eager people would be to see the rare views.

The way was now gradually upward, as they were approaching the foothills of the mountain, though the peak itself was still some distance off. A fine view could be had, and Blake made the most of it with the camera.

"I don't believe we'll find any better place to camp than this," remarked Blake, toward the close of the afternoon, when they had reached a spot where a little spring bubbled forth from the side of the hill. There was a level space where the tents could be pitched, plenty of grazing for the bullocks, and a supply of firewood.

"Let's stay here," said Joe. "It suits me all right."

"And there aren't any houses near us to fall down and crush us," added C. C., in his usual spirit. "If I have to live on an earthquake

island," he went on, "let me stay in the open where I'll be comparatively safe."

"Hush! The two Indians will hear you, and maybe desert!" exclaimed Blake, in a low voice. "We don't want to scare them away from us."

"That's right," agreed Mr. Piper. "I'll be more careful after this."

The bullocks were unhitched and tethered out, and the camp was pitched. A fire was soon going, and while the two natives built one for themselves to cook the food provided for them, our friends sat about their own blaze getting an early supper.

"We might as well eat while we have the chance," said the comedian, "or otherwise——"

Then he happened to remember his resolution, and suppressed the direful prediction he had been about to make.

"I guess I'll film this," remarked Blake, as the things were cooking, and the coffee pot sending out an aromatic odor. "It will make a dandy view, and the light is just about strong enough, and in the right direction."

Joe assisted him to set up the camera, and then the two boys took turns in turning the handle of the moving picture machine, so that in part of the view about the camp Blake ap-

peared and in others Joe's form and countenance were visible.

The night passed quietly, for which the rescuers were duly grateful, for they were tired and needed rest and sleep. Not a tremor nor any indication from the volcano disturbed them, and after an early breakfast they were ready to take the trail again.

"Is this the way you came?" asked Blake of Harshi, when they had traveled nearer to the foot of the mountain. "Do you remember coming this route?"

"Yes, us come here. This place we eat," he added as he showed where a fire had been made on some rocks. There were plain indications of a camp having been made there, as Joe and Blake could easily tell from their experience in the West.

"Then we're on the right road," said Professor Martin. "Oh, if we can only find that cave and save my friends! Make haste, men!" he called to the native drivers.

Moduk took this too literally and began speeding up his patient beasts. As the way was rough the cart bumped over the stones in no gentle fashion.

"Hold on there!" cried the professor, after a

moment or two of traveling, he happening to be in this cart. "Go slower."

"I thought you were in a hurry," observed C. C.

"So I am, but there's dynamite in this box," said the scientist, indicating one at his feet. "We don't want to be in *too* much of a hurry," he added, significantly.

"That's right," agreed Blake, as the driver slowed down his animals, which were glad enough of the chance, since they were not used to going fast.

They were now close to the foot of the mountain, and soon would begin the upward trail. Eagerly they all looked toward the slope of the volcano, somewhere in the depths of which they hoped to find the missing men.

Suddenly, and without any more warning than a distant rumble, there came a terrific shock. The ground shook under them, and there was a loud report. From the volcano shot a cloud of smoke.

"It's erupting!" cried Blake.

"Yes, and there's an earthquake at the same time," exclaimed the professor. "I must set my instruments and make some observations. This is a rare occurrence."

"And we must get some pictures of this!" cried Blake. "Joe, get busy and——"

But he did not finish. The very ground seemed to heave up, and Blake, as were the others with him, was pitched from the cart, which was tilted to one side as though it had gone into a ditch.

Meanwhile the volcano continued to give forth thunderous reports, and the ground trembled beneath the feet of our friends. The bullocks bellowed pitifully, and the two natives shrieked with fear.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A NARROW ESCAPE

"ARE you hurt, Blake?"

"No—not much, anyhow—just some bruises. How about you, Joe?"

"I got a fierce bump on the head, and I'm dizzy, but I guess I'll be all right in a few minutes. What happened?" and Joe rubbed his forehead in a dazed manner.

"Earthquake—of course," answered Blake. "You can't have forgotten, for it's still going on."

"That's right," agreed his chum, as he felt the ground beneath his feet trembling and heaving. "This is fierce!"

The bullocks had broken loose from the carts and started to run away, and then, evidently feeling that they were safer near human beings, had come to a stop.

The two natives, likewise, after picking themselves up from where they had been tossed by



the violence of the shock, began to bolt, and then as they saw the terrible power of the earthquake manifested on all sides of them, but more violently in the distance, concluded to remain.

"How about you, Professor?" called Blake to the little scientist, who was rummaging about in the partly overturned cart. "Are you hurt?"

"No—I'm all right—where is that instrument? Oh, I have it," and securing one of his pieces of scientific apparatus he began using it to register and record the severity and duration, as well as the direction of the earthquake shock.

"I guess there's not much the matter with him," observed Joe. "But, Blake, we must get busy with that camera—that is, if it isn't damaged."

"No, they all seem to be in good shape. I'll take one, and you can handle the other. Now, if we could get C. C. to look after the automatic one for us—by the way, where is he?"

"I don't know," replied Joe. "The last I saw of him——"

"Here I am!" came the mournful voice of the comedian, and he crawled out from beneath a pile of blankets that had been put into one of the carts to make the riding easier, for the

vehicles had no springs. "Here I am," repeated Mr. Piper. "Are any of you alive?"

"Pretty much so," answered Blake. "Are you hurt?"

"No, but almost scared to death, and that's nearly as bad. Oh, this is awful!"

"It's going down!" cried Joe, referring to the earthquake, which seemed to be subsiding.

The ground trembled less now, and only heaved occasionally. Off in the distance, however, great cracks could be seen to open and close, and part of a hillside was sliding away.

"Hurry, Blake!" called Joe. "Get those cameras working, or we'll lose all this."

"Come on," cried his chum. "Can you help us, C. C.?"

"I—I guess so—if I'm all here," came the answer. "Oh, if I ever come to a place like this again I'll know it!"

Slowly he arose, trying to steady himself against the motion of the earth, as though he were on the deck of some ship at sea. He made his way toward where Blake and Joe were getting out the moving picture machines. The latter did not seem to be damaged by their upset.

"There's Professor Martin, as cool as a cake of ice," remarked Joe, and indeed the little sci-

entist, as though unaware of the forces of nature working all around him, was observing his instruments, reading the records made and jotting the results down in a notebook, just as if he were in his laboratory at Washington.

"Come back here!" cried Blake to Harshi and Moduk. "Get these carts righted and catch the bullocks. We may need them again."

"Me come," replied Harshi submissively, as he motioned for his cousin to accompany him. Soon they were getting the carts in shape for further progress in case the disturbance subsided.

"The old volcano isn't doing much," observed Blake, as he got one of the hand cameras ready, and focused it on a part of the ground, some distance off, where the greatest force of the earthquake seemed to be expending itself.

"No, we'd better let C. C. aim the automatic machine at that, while we work the others. There's no telling when that big chimney may begin to spout fire and stones, so we want to be ready for it."

Mr. Piper, who had often worked the automatic camera while with the boys in Africa, readily agreed to operate it now. Accordingly, he focused it on the peak of Mr. Regi, which

was no great distance off now, though still far above the heads of our friends.

Then Joe got the other hand camera, and soon the moving pictures boys were busy turning the handles of the machines, the mechanism clicking and buzzing away, while the long strip of sensitized film slipped along back of the shutter and lens, making pictures at the rate of sixteen a second.

Fortunately for our friends, the area of disturbance seemed to have passed them. After that one tremendous upheaval, and the explosion, that seemed to come from some place away below the surface, as well as from the crater of the volcano, nature was in a calmer mood—at least near where Blake, Joe and their friends were.

But, farther off, the ground was still being torn and heaved by inner convulsions. Great cracks appeared, only to close up again, raising ridges of earth and stones. Immense rocks were heaved up to the surface, only to disappear again into some new chasm, and the whole face of the country was changing.

Several times slight shocks were felt, and the boys momentarily expected to be placed in dire peril again, but they were not—at least for some time.

Professor Martin was kept so busy that he paid no attention to the lads, except to look at them now and then. He saw that they were getting the moving pictures that he wanted, and which would accompany, and illustrate, the lectures he meant to give, describing these scenes.

For the time being, the scientist almost forgot about the friends he had come to rescue. What their fate might be, now that this new upheaval had come, no one could say. Would their cave, in which it was thought they were imprisoned, remain whole? Or would it be crushed together like an eggshell, with the scientists and their porters in it? No one could answer, and, even while he did not give them as much thought as before, because of the close attention he had to pay to his scientific work, Professor Martin promised himself that as soon as possible the search would be renewed.

"Say, there's not much doing at the volcano," called Mr. Piper, after he had set the automatic camera in motion, and had pointed it at the peak. "What's the use of wasting films on just some smoke coming out of the top?"

"You can't tell when it will get busy, though," answered Blake, "and we want to be ready——"

He did not finish, for at that moment there came a sharp explosion in the direction of the

volcano, and a mass of what seemed to be rocks was tossed out.

"There she goes!" cried Joe.

"Get that, C. C.," requested Blake.

"Oh, I'll get it, all right," came the reply, as the comedian, who had momentarily stopped the compressed air motor, again set it going.

Indeed, Mt. Regi seemed to be doing its best not to be outdone by the earthquake. Shower after shower of rocks was cast forth, accompanied by flames and smoke. Sometimes only a few rocks would fly out, and again there would seemingly be enough to make a big railroad embankment. The fire, too, would die down, and then flash up again, while a pall of smoke continually hovered around the summit of the crater.

"This is the best yet!" cried Blake, as he saw what a fine series of pictures C. C. Piper was getting. "And all danger seems to have passed—at least for the present, Joe."

"Don't be too sure," came the answer from his chum. "Knock wood, you know. There is still plenty going on over on my side of the house," and he pointed toward where he had focused his machine. The ground was quivering as though it was jelly in a gigantic bowl, being shaken by the hand of a titanic monster.

"I've shut down for a while," answered Blake. "The shock seems entirely spent over here," and he nodded toward the place where he had focused his apparatus. Indeed, there was no longer a disturbance, and it was useless to waste foot after foot of film on it, when, by simply turning the crank Blake could start his machine whenever he wanted to—or whenever there was anything worth filming.

Professor Martin continued to keep busy, and Blake was thinking of going to the scientist and offering his services, but refrained, for he realized that the earthquake might recur at any time and he would not be at his post of duty at the camera. So he remained there, waiting for whatever would happen.

The bullocks had seemingly gotten over their fright, and were contentedly feeding on the grass. They had been hitched to the carts again, the stout vehicles having suffered no damage. The two natives were close together, talking in their own language, doubtless wondering why white men were so foolish as to remain in the vicinity of so much danger.

The volcano was now gradually subsiding, though as yet there had been no flow of lava. It might be expected, however, and C. C. Piper

was in readiness to get a view of this on his automatic camera.

Suddenly there came a hush over everything. Even the distant tremors of the earth ceased. It was as though nature had repented of her fierce and boisterous mood, and was more like her quiet self.

"Well, I guess it's all over," remarked Blake.

"It looks that way," agreed Joe. "Then we can start off again and hunt for the scientists."

"Which will be a very good thing to do," put in Professor Martin. "I regret that we had to be interrupted, but in the end science will be benefited, for I have made some very valuable records and observations this last fifteen minutes. I only hope, if my friends have been safe up to this time, that this shock has not harmed them."

He began putting away his instruments and note books. The film of the automatic camera was almost run out, and C. C. was getting ready to shut off the air motor. Joe called to his chum:

"Might as well stop, I guess. It seems to be all over."

"Yes, I reckon so," agreed Blake. He put out his hand to take his camera off the tripod,



when there suddenly came a slight tremor of the earth.

"Here it comes again!" yelled Mr. Piper, while the bullocks again bellowed in fear.

Then, before any one could move, there came a rending sound, as though earth and rocks were being torn apart by some great hand. At Blake's very feet a great chasm opened, and one side—that farthest from him—slid away, and crumpled up. The whole side of the hill on which he had been standing fell away, and so close to it was the lad that the earth dropped from one leg of the camera. The apparatus would have toppled over into the chasm that opened, had not Blake caught it instinctively.

"Look out!" yelled Joe. It meant nothing, but it was all he could think of to say.

With a white face Blake looked down, holding the camera. He stood on the brink of a precipice, having just escaped a terrible fate by a narrow margin.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE LANDSLIDE

SEVERAL seconds passed before anyone spoke. There was a silence, not even broken by any natural noises, for with the cracking of the earth, all convulsions seemed to have ceased, unless it was merely a short respite before something worse came. As for Blake, he scarcely realized the terrible peril he had escaped, nor, for a short time, did his friends.

Then Joe found voice to say:

"Back, Blake! Get back before you slide down there!"

For there was a great pit, now, where there had been solid ground before, and at the bottom were immense rocks, piled in such fantastic fashion, and so precariously, that they might topple over at any moment. And if Blake slid down among them his previous escape from death would have availed him little.

"Move cautiously," came from Professor Mar-

tin. "The earth may be undermined where you stand, Blake. Oh, if we had a rope or something to throw to you!"

"Jump back!" advised C. C. Piper.

"No, don't do that!" came quickly from the scientist. "If you do the jar may start another landslide. Go back cautiously, Blake."

By this time the lad had recovered himself; his brain, that had been stagnated by the terror of his position, was beginning to work again. Carefully he took a backward step, carrying the camera with him. Then he hesitated, listening and feeling with every nerve in his body for a recurrence of the earth-tremor that might indicate a further disturbance. But nothing happened. The ground seemed firm beneath his feet.

Blake took another step backward. He was breathing more easily now, and was in less fear. The others, too, who had been holding their breaths for several minutes, it seemed, ventured to take long respirations now. After all, fate had not dealt with them as they had feared.

"Come on—come on!" cried Joe. "You're all right, old man. Now turn around so I can get you. I want your face to show!"

In surprise Blake turned. The others, too, looked at Joe, and saw him focusing his camera

on his chum. Then Joe began to turn the handle, the buzzing and whirring announcing that the film was running.

"What are you doing?" cried Mr. Piper.

"Filming Blake," was the calm answer. "We might as well have all the sensations we can get, and he's safe now."

"Well, you are the limit!" cried Blake, with a laugh that had a note of relief in it. "Do you think I want to be in a film?"

"You're already in it," announced his chum. "I can't get a very good view of the big hole; but I'll film that later, after I show how close you were to the edge. Come on, that's good."

And he continued to register on the film the progress his chum made away from the dangerous spot. They all felt more relief now, and certainly Blake had a thankful heart. Many times he had been in danger, especially when filming the wild animals in Africa, but this time seemed more terrible than all. It was so unexpected, and the force of nature was so irresistible, that nothing could be compared with it.

When Blake rejoined his friends, they silently held out their hands to him, and palms were clasped in hearty fashion. It was a time for thanksgiving. Even the two natives seemed

overjoyed at Blake's escape, for they had taken a liking to him.

"Now I'm going to see if I can get a view of that big hole!" announced Joe, as he put a fresh reel of film in the camera.

"Don't go too close," warned Professor Martin. "There is no telling when another slide may come."

"I'll be careful," promised Joe, and, to give him his due, he was. He managed to get in an advantageous location, and took some pictures to show the depth of the chasm, and the great rocks at the bottom. Of course, it was not a "moving" picture in the sense that anything moved, but, in conjunction with the progress of Blake away from the edge, it would make a good film.

"I hardly know what to do," said Professor Martin, when Blake had put away his camera, and had taken a drink of cold coffee to steady his nerves.

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Piper. "Are you going to change your plans, Professor?"

"I hardly know what to say," was the reply. "We have all been in great danger—particularly Blake. Whether it is wise or safe to proceed up the mountain, to look for the cave in which

my friends may be imprisoned, I can hardly decide. Certainly I would like to rescue them—I must, in fact; but I have no right to ask others to go into danger.

“Perhaps it would be better for the boys and you, Mr. Piper, to return to Salina. It may be safer there, for from my observations I can see that this shock did not extend to the city. The area of worst disturbance seems to be in the vicinity of the volcano.

“So, if you wish to return, I alone will proceed with my quest. Perhaps the two natives will remain with me, unless you want them to go back with you,” he added in diffident tones.

“Go back!” cried Joe. “We’re not going back.”

“I should say not!” exclaimed Blake, who was now himself again. “We came to get moving pictures of this earthquake land and the volcano, and we’re going to do it. That was only a little scare. I’m all over it now. Of course we’re not going back.”

“But I don’t want to put you in danger,” objected the scientist. “I did not realize before, on account of thinking of merely the scientific side of it, what a risk I had asked you boys to assume.”

“Don’t worry,” said Joe, drily. “We’re used

to risks. We have to be in our business. This isn't the first time we've been in danger; is it, Blake?"

"No indeed. Of course this is a little different kind; but I think our good luck is with us, and that we'll come out all right. Go ahead, Professor, we'll be with you to the end."

"That's very good of you, boys, and I appreciate it," went on the scientific man. "I will be very glad to have your company and help. I shall need the latter very much if I am to rescue my friends."

"Perhaps, now that there has been such a convulsion, there will be a calm period, in which we can reach the hidden cave. It may even have been opened again by this last disturbance. Shall we go on?"

"Sure!" cried Joe, and Blake nodded his assent.

"How about you, Mr. Piper?" inquired the scientist.

"Well," slowly replied the comedian, "I suppose I'll be swallowed up in a big crack, as Blake nearly was, and since I never expect to get off this island alive, I might as well stick with you. I don't like being lonesome, especially when there's danger. Misery loves company, they say,

and certainly it's miserable enough here," and he proceeded to whistle a gay tune.

"That's a strange way of looking at it, but perhaps you are right," said Mr. Martin, with a short laugh. "Then we'll be glad to have you with us. I hope nothing will happen to any of us, but we are in the hands of Providence," and he spoke more solemnly than usual.

As it was getting late, and as the boys wanted to put some fresh films in their cameras, it was decided not to make any farther advance that day.

"We'll just camp here, then," decided the professor. "It is a good place, in spite of the big chasm that so nearly got Blake. Up above we do not know what we may find, and down below us, certainly there was such an upheaval that we may find no good water to drink. There is at least that here," and he pointed toward a bubbling spring nearby.

"There is plenty of grass for the animals, too," observed Joe. "It couldn't be better. I feel like eating, too."

"So do I," added Blake, who by this time seemed to be all over his fright. "I'll help get a meal."

A fire was soon blazing merrily and they gathered about it, talking over the experiences



through which they had just passed. The bullocks were unhitched, tents erected and preparations made for spending the night in camp there.

Professor Martin made some notes about the sudden occurrence of the cleft in the earth that had so nearly engulfed one of the party. There was nothing of which to take pictures now, save some fixed views, made with an ordinary camera, and Joe busied himself with that, while Blake got the meal.

The night was a quiet one, only a few distant rumblings being heard from the volcano. There were no earthquake shocks, for which all were thankful. Blake did not sleep well, but managed to get some rest. After breakfast they started forward once more.

"Harshi and his cousin don't seem to get along very well together this morning," observed Blake, as they were traveling upward again. The two natives were calling to one another from the carts which each one drove.

"They do seem to be having a quarrel," admitted Joe.

"Oh, Moduk doesn't want to go on any further, and Harshi is arguing with him, and telling him he'll get much money if he stays with us," explained Mr. Martin, who under-

stood something of the language of the West Indians. "I guess Harshi will have his way, too," he added.

The two natives seemed to have patched up their differences, whatever they were, before another mile had been covered, and there was no more disputing.

The way was rougher now, partly because it was less traveled, and partly on account of the upheaval of the day before. Still, they made good progress.

"Are we getting near the cave now?" asked the professor, anxiously, when they made a halt for dinner.

"Close here soon," answered Harshi. "We come bimeby in little time."

"Good! Every minute counts for the safety of my friends!" exclaimed the scientist.

"The volcano seems to be behaving itself today," remarked Blake, a little later.

"Yes, and the earth hasn't even trembled," added Blake. "I guess we're going to have a good day of it."

They were now going up a steep part of the mountain; so steep, in fact, that several times the bullocks had to be halted for rest.

"I'm going to get some views here!" exclaimed Blake on one such occasion. "There's

a magnificent one to be had from here. Where's that ordinary camera, Joe?"

"Here it is. I'll go with you."

"Don't go too far, nor be gone too long," advised the professor, and they promised to be careful.

Blake found a spot where a fine stretch of landscape seemed to invite pictures. He was looking through the finder, to locate a certain spot, when Joe, who was gazing about, suddenly uttered an exclamation.

"What is it?" cried Blake, glancing up.

"Am I mistaken, Blake, or is this side of the hill, on which we're standing, slipping down?" asked his chum.

"Slipping down!" cried Blake. "What do you mean?"

"Just what I said. Aren't we sliding? Look at those rocks, too! They're beginning to roll."

"So they are!" shouted Blake. "Joe, we're in a landslide, I guess! Let's run for it!"

## CHAPTER XV

### A FRUITLESS SEARCH

BEFORE the boys could put into operation the plan for escape proposed by Blake, matters had changed so quickly and in such fashion that they could not do so. Quickly gathering momentum, the earth, rocks, trees, and grass that formed a section of the side of the mountain fairly carried the boys along. It was as if one started down a steep, ash-covered railroad embankment, and suddenly found his feet imbedded in the yielding material, while the whole bank slid with him.

"This is awful!" cried Joe.

"It sure is," agreed Blake. "It's a new kind of terror. I wonder what's next in store for us?"

"Hard to tell," replied Joe, as he endeavored to maintain his footing on the treacherous surface. "Where will we end up?" and he looked down the long slope.

Fortunately, behind them were no large rocks or trees; only some sod, sand and low bushes. But on either side were great boulders, and, being heavier than the earth and small stones in which they had been imbedded, they started to roll faster.

"If any of those fellows get behind us, it will be all up with us!" cried Blake, as he gave a backward glance.

"Don't mention it!" cried Joe. "Can't we get out of this, somehow? It isn't very wide, and we could run down, and in a slanting direction, and so get to firm ground."

"We'll try it," decided Blake. "The only trouble is that we may get in the path of one of those big stones that may crush us. We've got to be careful, Joe."

"Being careful isn't going to help any in this queer earthquake land," replied his chum. "The best thing is to do all you get a chance to, and let everything else go. You'll stand just as good a chance. Wow! I nearly went over that time!"

They were literally being carried down the slope of the mountain, along with the landslide. Fortunately, the part of the big peak that had slipped away from its moorings, as it were, was not wide. It was like a small avalanche, or

glacier, not moving as fast as the one, nor as slowly as the latter.

"Watch for a good chance, and then cut across!" cried Blake. "If it wasn't for this sand it would be easier."

"That's right," came from Joe. For, at the moment when they had stopped to get some pictures, they had been standing on a sandy stretch, and into this they had now sunk over their ankles, which made progress difficult.

"Watch out for rocks," advised Blake, as he clung to the small camera with one hand, and waved his other arm in the air as a sort of balancing pole. "They're beginning to roll down faster now, and more of them."

Indeed, the landslide was increasing in size as it progressed. Big trees now began to suffer, being uprooted and carried along with the rocks and earth. The boulders, rolling down faster because of their weight and bulk, crashed into other stones with a loud noise. It was this racket that attracted the attention of the professor and Mr. Piper.

"Something has happened!" exclaimed the former, as he listened near the place where they had stopped to rest the bullocks.

"Yes, and it's still happening," agreed C. C.

"If it's the beginning of another earthquake, I hope the boys are——"

"Come on, we must go to them!" interrupted the scientist. "They may be in danger!"

Calling to the two natives to look after the camp, the white men hastened in the direction of the terrifying sounds. They became louder as they drew nearer. Trees were snapping off, and great rocks were crashing one against another.

"It's a landslide, all right!" shouted the professor as he ran on, followed by Mr. Piper.

In a short time they came to the place of the happening. They were above the boys, but could see them slipping and sliding down the side of the mountain, imbedded, up to their ankles, in the sand that was carrying them along with it.

"Run out! Run out!" shouted the professor, seeing the same chance for escape as had the lads.

"We will—as soon as we see a good opening," replied Joe.

"Here's one now!" cried Blake, a moment later. "Cut across, Joe!"

He had glanced back, and observed that, by running to the right, they could reach comparatively firm ground. There were no big boulders

on the way down then, though some might be dislodged later. It was the best chance they had yet had, and they took it.

Pulling their feet from the clinging sand they dashed in a diagonal direction down the slope, aiming to cross out of the landslide. It was hard work, but they managed to do it. Blake was the first to reach a portion of the mountain of almost solid rock formation that had not slipped. He turned to look for Joe, and saw that his chum was also near safety.

But, as luck would have it, at that moment a great rock, starting from above, bounded on its downward way.

"Look out, Joe!" cried Blake, for the great stone was aiming directly for his chum. Joe sank deep into the sand.

"I—I can't move!" he cried.

"Wait—I'll help you!" yelled Blake, while from above the professor and C. C. Piper started to the rescue.

And then, the great rock in motion hit another, imbedded in the landslide. There was a crash and the larger rock split apart, the fragments flying in all directions.

"Duck!" cried Blake, instinctively, as he crouched in a heap. Joe did the same, but he was not as lucky as his chum. Blake was only



hit by a small piece of stone, while a large section struck Joe a glancing blow on the left arm. He toppled to the earth, and was being carried down by the landslide when Blake, aided by Mr. Piper, who had by this time reached the spot, pulled him to the firm part. Joe was white and motionless.

"He's dead!" cried Blake in alarm.

"No, only fainted, I guess," replied the comedian, not making any direful predictions this time. "I'm afraid his arm is broken, though," he added, for it seemed limp and useless.

But, as good luck would have it, Joe was only badly bruised. He soon recovered consciousness, and was able to sit up. The arm was very painful, but it was bandaged and soon Joe was able to walk. The landslide came to an end soon after the boys had been saved.

"But it sure was a lively time while it lasted," said Blake. "I'm only sorry we didn't get some moving pictures of it."

"That's right," agreed Joe.

"You boys are the limit!" cried the comedian. "Moving pictures when you're in such danger as that!"

"They'd be all the better," declared Blake.

They went back to where they had left the carts, and found that nothing had occurred

there. The landslide seemed to be only an isolated one, such as often occurs on steep hillsides, where the top soil has been disturbed.

"Are you well enough to proceed in the search for the cave?" asked Professor Martin, after a pause to give the boys a chance to rest.

"Sure, I am," answered Blake. "I don't know about Joe, though," and he looked at his chum, whose face was drawn with pain.

"As soon as I can get this arm in a sling I'll be with you," was the answer. A little later they started off. They traveled all that afternoon, but when night came Harshi declared they were still below the cave. He could recognize landmarks, he said.

There was nothing to do but camp again, which they did, not having the same peace as the night before, however, for there were a number of disturbing shocks. With breakfast over, they again set out, a pause being made to get some moving pictures of the volcano, which again "started up business," as Blake put it.

"We ought to be at that cave soon now; hadn't we, Harshi?" asked the professor. The Indian did not answer, but looked puzzled.

"I wonder if he's forgotten where it is?" said Joe.

"It begins to look that way," admitted Blake.

"Cave was here," said Harshi, as he looked about him, and pointed to the side of the mountain. "Cave here I sure—but him no here now."

"But a cave can't have moved," declared Mr. Piper.

"Cave no here," insisted the Indian.

"Let's look farther," suggested Joe.

They did, but to no effect. There were landmarks, which Harshi pointed out as marking the opening of the cave, but the cavern itself had disappeared.

## CHAPTER XVI

### MYSTERIOUS NOISES

"Now let's understand this," said Professor Martin, when they had traveled about for some time in the vicinity of the place where Harshi said the cave had been. "Are you sure, my friend, that you are anywhere near where that cavern was? Might you not be mistaken in the locality? Is it even on this side of the mountain?" and he looked fixedly at the Indian.

Harshi considered a moment before replying. It was plain that he understood what was asked of him, and he seemed to realize that he might possibly be open to the charge of intentionally deceiving his white employer.

"Maybe the cave was never here," spoke Blake.

"Why do you say that?" asked Joe.

"Because," replied Blake, "it's very plain that he and Moduk don't like this place any too well. They'd be glad of a chance to get away from

this volcano, where most of the earthquake shocks occur. What would be more natural than that he should pick out some spot, say it was where the cave had been, and that it had vanished. Then he could say there was no use in a further search, and he and his cousin could go home."

"Well, there's something in that," admitted Joe. "Yet he looks like an honest chap."

"Yes, but you can't tell much by looks. My opinion is that he's in a blue funk, and wants to get away."

The two lads looked at Harshi. He did indeed seem an honest native, and, just as that moment, following the professor's earnest question, he appeared to be deeply considering the matter.

"Well," asked the scientist, "have you made up your mind about it? Are you sure the cave was here?"

"Me very sure," declared Harshi. "Spot look much like same, but some change. Cave, him gone, though. See, this rock here before, and white mans make picture of it. See—look!" he suddenly cried, "me see one white man him stop, look at this rock and go scratchy on him!" and he pointed to the big boulder in question.

"What in the world does he mean?" asked C. C.

"'Go scratchy on him,'" repeated Blake. "That gets me!"

"Why, it's plain enough," declared Joe. "He means that one of the professors scratched his initials on the rock."

"That it—'nitals!" exclaimed Harshi. "See!" and he showed where the letters "J. B." appeared.

"That's right!" exclaimed Professor Martin. "J. B.—John Bristol. It would be just like him to do this. Boys, I believe Harshi is right, after all. The cave *was* here."

"But where is it now?" asked C. C., looking about. They were on the side of the mountain, and while it was rough and covered with rocks, there was no sign of any cavern.

"I think he is further right, also, in what he says," went on the scientist. "The whole side of the mountain may have shifted in some great upheaval, and the entrance to the cave covered. I half expected something like that, and so brought the dynamite to blast a way in if possible. The question is where was the entrance to the cave?"

"And that's going to be a hard one to answer," declared C. C. "Perhaps, after all, they

went in some other cave. There may have been several hereabouts before the crash."

"Him go in this cave—in him cave that was here," insisted Harshi, who understood English pretty well.

"I suppose there is no other way out of it," sighed Professor Martin. "My poor friends did go in some cave that was here, and are now imprisoned in it. Where to begin to attempt the work of rescue is more than I can even guess at. Poor Bristol and his colleagues—possibly this is the only remembrance I will ever have of him," and he gazed at the initials roughly scratched on the surface of the rock, as though done with some sharp instrument in a hurry.

"Oh, don't go talking that way!" cried C. C. Piper. "I am bad enough, but you are getting worse, Professor."

They all stared at the comedian.

"You are right!" exclaimed the little scientist. "I must not give way in this fashion. We'll try and think of a plan for rescuing my friends. At least, we know this is to be the starting point. Where we will end, who can say? Now let us go into camp, and prepare for a long stay. We must begin to think logically."

They all felt rather better, after hearing the professor talk that way. The bullocks were

tethered out, though the grass was not so plentiful as below. But there was water at hand.

Above them the road still went up toward the crater of the volcano. In years past there had been certain chemical rocks obtained from the top of the mountain, and the natives had built a rough highway to the very summit. Then the supply had given out, and the road had become almost impassable. In places it was overgrown with trees and bushes, and now, with the eruption, and rocks tossed down on it, lava overflowing it in places, and great cracks made in it by the earthquake shocks, it was risky to travel on it.

"We couldn't take the carts much higher, anyhow," commented Blake, as he helped set up the tents. "So this is as good a place to stay as any. We can make excursions in various directions from day to day."

"When it doesn't earthquake, or rain melted rocks," said C. C., with a gloomy air, that seemed to vanish instantly, for he began whistling merrily.

Joe's arm pained him much, and he could do little to help. The Indians, however, were of great service. They seemed to be less afraid now.

In order to make sure that they were at the



right place Professor Martin again questioned Harshi, but the native stuck to his story. He even called upon his cousin for confirmation, recalling that when the calamity had happened, and Harshi had fled to his home, he told his cousin of the matter and described the place. This description, Moduk said, tallied exactly with the spot where Harshi had stated the scientists were, making due allowances for the disappearance of the cave and the change caused by the earthquake.

They had a meal, and felt the better for it. Then Blake took a number of views of the spot with the moving picture camera, shifting it from place to place so that, in case the professors were ever rescued, they would have a remarkable and realistic souvenir of the place of their imprisonment.

Then began a systematic search for what had been the entrance to the cave. Professor Martin explained his plan.

"It would be of no use to explode dynamite indiscriminately," he said. "It would waste our powder, and be dangerous. We must find where the mouth of the cavern was, and free it from the rocks and dirt that have probably slid down to cover it. So we will begin by digging in dif-

ferent places, starting near the stone where poor Bristol put his initials."

They divided that section of the side of the mountain roughly into squares, and each was assigned so many squares to investigate. Joe could not do any of this work, on account of his sore arm, but he helped in other ways. The idea was explained to the two Indians, who readily understood it, and used the picks and shovels to good advantage.

They were three days at this work, and at the close of the third, tired and discouraged, they sat about the camp-fire, for their labors had been without result.

"If that cave is here," declared Blake, rather gloomily, "it is buried so far below the surface that we can never hope to come to it by the means we have."

"I'm afraid you are right," assented the professor. "And if we do uncover it my poor friends will have perished. Still, I am not going to give up. We will make a search higher up the mountain to-morrow. We have hitherto gone on the theory that the cave, if it went anywhere—and it certainly has disappeared—I say we have gone on the assumption that it is below its former location."

"Well, isn't it?" asked Joe.

"It may not—it may have slid *up* the mountain," said the professor, calmly. "Therefore we should search up the slope."

"Up!" cried C. C. "Do you mean that the cave could have gone up hill?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Martin. "Remember," he went on, as he saw the boys looking strangely at him, "that we have to deal with tremendous forces of nature—forces that can produce the effects in that volcano, that can cut away a whole side of a mountain as easily as we can lift a shovelful of dirt—such forces could as easily shove a whole section, including a rocky cave, up hill, as well as down."

"There's something in that," declared Blake.

"Then we'll look up the mountain to-morrow," declared Joe. "Your idea is, then, Professor, that the cave is one hewn out of solid rock?"

"I am hoping that is the case," was the reply. "Otherwise, there is little hope for my friends. Only a cavern hewn by nature out of the solid rock could withstand the awful pressure put on it, and, in fact, it would be the only kind that could be moved bodily. Any other cave would have collapsed."

"But, even if the scientists are in that sort of cave, and they are hidden in it somewhere in

the interior of the mountain," spoke Blake, "how can they have kept alive all this while?"

"I do not know," said Professor Martin, solemnly. "Providence sometimes does wonderful things. Think how many times miners have been rescued alive, when everyone had given them up for dead. My friends have food and water with them, Harshi says—I know Bristol would take plenty of both. They may be in such a position that they can get air—and, with their supplies, they might live for two weeks or more. We will still hope."

The next morning they started up the mountain on their search. There had been no earthquake shocks for four days, and the volcano was only slightly active. There was nothing of which to make moving pictures, and the boys devoted all their time to helping in the search. Joe's arm was better now, and he could be of service.

They followed the same plan as before, dividing the labor, and working on the principle of the laid-out squares. They covered a large area, but on the second day of their ascent of the mountain from where they had made their camp, there were no results.

Joe, however, made a curious discovery. He

was digging away one afternoon when he suddenly uttered a cry:

"I've found it! I've found it!" he shouted.

"What?" cried Blake, though he knew what the answer must be.

"The cave!" replied his chum.

They all rushed to his side, only to be disappointed. Joe indeed had broken into a small cavern, displacing a rock that covered the entrance. But a glance showed that it was too small to be the one entered by the scientists. Then, too, the formation immediately about it indicated that there had been no disturbances of nature for many years. The grass was still growing around it, whereas in other places it had been uprooted by the upheavals.

"That's too bad!" cried Joe, to his friends. "I sure thought I had found it."

"Well, it's a cavern, plainly enough," declared Blake; "and large enough to hold two or three of us, at any rate," and he stepped inside with Joe. He flashed his electric pocket light, and they could see that the sides and roof were of solid rock, as was the floor.

"I hope my friends are in such a place at this," said the professor. "It may prove their salvation—if we can ever find them. I hope——"

"Hark!" cried Blake to the professor, who stood at the mouth of the cave with the others. "Did you hear that?"

"What?" asked C. C. Piper.

"That noise—or, rather, those noises," answered Blake. "Come in, Professor, and see if you don't hear something like a pounding on the rock."

There was no mistaking Blake's meaning. Quickly he and Joe got out of the cave, and the professor and Mr. Piper entered it. No sooner had the comedian set foot inside than he cried out:

"I do hear it! It's just as if someone was tapping on the rock!"

The professor held up his hand for silence. He listened. Even the boys outside, now, could hear the sounds. The scientist nodded his head. Then he got an instrument, something like the stethoscope used by physicians to listen to the beating of the heart. He applied one end to the rocky wall, and put the rubber tubes to his ears. He listened intently. What did he hear?

## CHAPTER XVII

### DOWN IN A CRATER

"DOES the noise still keep up?" finally asked Joe, unable to bear the suspense any longer. "Can you still hear it?"

The professor removed the instrument, and nodded his head in affirmation. But he showed no signs of delight, such as Blake and Joe expected.

"Can those sounds be made by your friends signaling?" asked Blake, eagerly.

The professor shook his head.

"I am sorry to say they are not," he said, in dejected tones. "At first I thought they were; but, after listening through the instrument, I am certain the sounds are caused by rocks falling, or being displaced somewhere in the interior of the mountain.

"Very possibly there is another cavern somewhere near this. The recent disturbances, or perhaps some disturbances still going on in the

interior, cause the rocks to break off and drop. The solid stone acts as a sort of telephone, and transmits the sound a long distance. With this instrument I can hear very plainly. Try it, all of you."

They did so, by turns, and all were forced to confess that the theory of the scientist was correct. The sound of distant rocks falling could plainly be heard, and the noises were so irregular, as regards time, that they could not be taken for signals made by imprisoned men.

"If my friends were knocking," went on Mr. Martin, "they would adopt some system. Probably they would use the Morse telegraph code, as all of them are familiar with that. It is another hope blasted."

"But don't give up!" cried Mr. Piper, who seemed to be getting into the rôle he had assumed in Africa—a comforter more than a calamity-crier. "We may find them yet."

"I trust so," spoke the scientist, in a low voice. "Well, we may as well go on with the search."

They did for several days more, but without result. Then, one morning, as they started to their labors, working higher up the slope of the mountain from their temporary camp, they were startled by an explosion in the volcano.



"It's going to resume business!" cried Blake. "I wonder if we hadn't better get the cameras?"

"Do so, my boy," said the professor. "We must not forget that we came here to get scientific data that may be of service to mankind. We will also rescue my friends if possible, but if they have *given* up their lives to the advancement of science, it is no more than other men have done. One could not die in a more noble cause, save, perhaps, in the service of one's country."

He spoke solemnly, and, indeed, a spirit of solemnity seemed to be over all of them. They still had hopes, but they were growing fainter each day.

The volcano lost little time in "getting down to business," as Joe expressed it. Hardly had the boys gotten their moving picture machines in readiness than there was a tremendous discharge of stones, smoke and fire.

"This is going to be a corker!" cried Blake. "Come on, Joe!"

"Go ahead! I'm with you," answered his chum.

"And I'm coming, too," announced Professor Martin. "I must make some records of this. One needs much data on which to form theories regarding volcanoes, since they vary so."

The whole party, with the exception of the two

natives, who could not be induced to approach the vicinity of the crater, moved rapidly up the side of the mountain.

"It's a good thing the wind is blowing the smoke away from us," remarked Joe, as he looked to see if the film in his machine was all ready for running out. "Otherwise we might be choked."

"That's right," agreed Blake. "I'm going to get as near as I dare this time. I want a dandy film—the best yet."

"I'm with you," announced Joe.

They were fortunate, in that though the volcano was spouting furiously, there were no tremblings or quivers of the earth. All earthquake action seemed to be absent, or, otherwise it would have been difficult to ascend the slope, for the way was very rough.

"She certainly is going some!" cried Joe, when they had gone on a little distance.

"Yes, I guess we'd better stop here," decided Blake. "We can get a good view from this point, and it will be safer."

"I think you are right," agreed the professor.

"I *know* it!" exclaimed C. C. "I'm not going any farther, anyhow. This is good enough for me."

They were close enough to the spouting volcano to make fairly good pictures. Setting up the ma-

chines Blake and Joe began to grind away at the handles. They were somewhat separated, so as to get different views, and though they would be quite similar in a way, it was decided to make two films of this grand sight, so that if one did not turn out well the other might.

Professor Martin was already at work with his instruments, making records of the activity of Mt. Regi. Mr. Piper held himself in readiness to assist either the boys or the scientist.

"Whew!" suddenly cried Joe. "Smell that sulphur, Blake?"

"I guess I do. The wind is shifting."

It needed but a glance at the smoke to tell this, even had not the overpowering odor of gas accompanied the change in the direction of the air currents. The black pall was shifting until it hung directly over the heads of our friends, and several hundred feet above them.

"Hello! It's raining ashes!" suddenly exclaimed Mr. Piper.

"That usually happens at a volcanic eruption," answered the professor, looking up from his notes. "Are you getting good films, boys?" he asked.

"The best ever," answered Joe. "If these don't satisfy Uncle Sam, none will."

"They couldn't be better," declared Blake. "Of course we may be able to get a bit nearer——"

He did not finish, but suddenly ceased turning the handle of his machine.

"What's the matter?" asked Joe, whose film had broken, and needed patching.

"Look! Look!" cried Blake. "There comes the lava!"

He pointed up the mountain. It was just after an extraordinarily loud report. They saw that a crack had appeared in the side of the volcano, and from it now issued a red-hot stream of molten rock.

"Boys, we've got to run for it again!" declared the professor, as he hastily caught up his instruments. "It's coming right our way, and I don't see anything to stop it this time! Come on!"

Joe ceased trying to mend the broken film, and caught up his machine. Blake had it in mind to linger a few moments longer to film the rare scene, and did succeed in getting a number of views. Then he, too, became aware of the danger, and began to go down the side of the mountain. C. C. Piper was already in retreat.

Hardly had they all gotten under way than there came another loud report. The ground trembled. It swayed and heaved beneath their feet.

"This is going to be a fierce one!" cried Joe, staggering on with his machine.

"Going to be!" exclaimed Blake. "It's fierce right now, to my way of thinking!"

A great crack appeared across the road up which they had come. They could not advance, and to turn aside was impractical, as the path was most uncertain.

"That stream of lava is catching up to us!" yelled Joe.

They looked back, to see that this was indeed so. It began to appear as though they were caught in a trap.

"We've got to chance it to one side or the other!" called the professor. "Take the left or right, boys!"

At that instant came another convulsion. The professor stumbled and fell. Joe and Blake kept their footing with difficulty, as did Mr. Piper.

Then, off to the left, there came a shifting and sliding of the surface. A great hole appeared—a hole that seemed lined with black rocks.

Professor Martin, sighting it, called:

"Boys, there's the opening to an old volcano—an extinct one—it's a cold crater—make for that and we may be saved!"

The shaking and trembling ceased all at once. The big hole—the ancient crater—seemed to offer

a haven. They made for it on the run. The slope into it was easier than at first appeared.

"Down we go!" cried Blake, as he darted into the opening. The molten lava was only a short distance away now.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE BLAZING CRACKS

ONE after another the remainder of the party followed Blake into the old crater. It was indeed a haven of refuge, for it needed but a look to convince even C. C. Piper that it was a safe place. Years ago the fires that once must have raged in it had died out, leaving the rocky sides blackened and half-melted into fantastic shapes.

"This—was a—lucky—find!" panted Joe, as he caught up to Blake, who had picked out the easiest path of descent, and had come to rest on a ledge of rock.

"It wasn't a find," answered his chum. "It has always been here, only the cover happened to come off at just the right moment."

"Indeed it did," agreed Professor Martin. "Providence has been very good to us. I only hope my friends are as well off."

Chaos seemed to reign outside of the crater. The volcano continued to send out booming

noises, like distant thunder—now and then a louder explosion and flash of fire conveying the idea of a near-by thunderstorm.

Entering the crater they went below what was formerly the rim. It was exactly as if there had been buried in the earth a great bowl, covered over, and now the cover, by the force of nature, had slipped off, leaving the place open. It was into this that our friends had fled.

"Is the lava coming this way?" asked Mr. Piper, when they had gotten their breaths.

"I'll take a look," volunteered Blake.

Cautiously he clambered up the slope to the edge of the old crater.

"Hurrray!" he shouted a moment later. "She's shifted to the other side. "Even our camp isn't in danger."

"Then we must get some pictures!" cried Joe, with whom the instinct was as strong as with his chum.

Rapidly he mended the broken film, and then, followed by Blake, he went to the top of the crater, where they took turns in getting views of the volcano, now with the molten lava flowing from the crack in its side. For ten minutes the outward gush of melted rock kept up, and then ceased. And it was high time, too, for the boys had used up about all the film they had with them.



"I guess it's safe to go out now!" remarked the professor, as he took an observation, having been engaged, while the boys were making pictures, in taking notes.

"Whew, it's hot!" cried C. C. Piper, as he stepped out of the crater.

"I guess yes!" agreed Joe, as he wiped his forehead. He was perspiring freely, as was Blake. For the stream of lava was not far away, and it was still glowing red, though it had "set," or gotten somewhat hard, as does plaster of Paris.

"And we never noticed it until now," said Blake. Indeed, they had been so interested in taking pictures that they had not realized the heat of the melted rock as it flowed along.

"How are we going to get back to our camp?" asked Joe, as he surveyed the scene. Indeed, it was a serious question, for the lava was across the path they had come up.

"We'll have to chance it down among the rocks," decided Blake, after an observation.

"And be very careful," added Professor Martin. "A slip will be dangerous, and some of the rocks are so poised that they might come down in an avalanche at any time."

"Whew! I'm covered with ashes!" cried C. C., as he dusted himself off. "It's as bad as riding

on a railroad where they burn soft coal in the engines."

Every member of the party was in the same state, their clothes being covered with a fine sediment, that seemed to have sifted down from the smoke that still hung like a pall over their heads.

"And look at your face, Blake!" cried Joe.

"Yours is just as bad," asserted his chum, with a laugh. Neither had much to brag about, for with the perspiration, which they wiped off now and then, they looked more like coal-heavers than moving picture operators.

"But we can wash when we get to camp," said Joe.

"If we ever do," remarked C. C. Piper, rather gloomily. "It begins to look as though——"

"Oh, please don't!" begged Joe. "We have troubles enough as it is."

"I guess that's right," agreed the comedian.

It was not easy, in making their way along, to avoid the red-hot lava, but they finally managed it. The volcano was less active now.

"Probably the escape of the lava relieved the pressure," explained the professor. "It will be quiet now for a few days, and then, very likely, will break out again."

"Well, we got some dandy films, anyhow," declared Blake.

"That's what!" added Joe.

"But you ran a great risk in taking them," was the opinion of Mr. Piper.

The boys did not seem to think of this. They were becoming so used to "taking chances" in their work that it was almost second nature to them. Their minds were wholly centered on the cameras, on turning the handle, properly focusing the subject, and seeing that the film ran freely.

They found the natives gone when they reached their camp, after a rather hazardous journey. Harshi and Moduk had disappeared, but the bullocks and carts were still there.

"Where are they?" asked Joe.

"I guess they took advantage of our absence to skip," declared Blake. "The volcano was too much for them, this time, I reckon."

There was no trace of the two West Indians, as a look down the trail showed. Blake even used a pair of field glasses, but could get no view of them. Nor did it show that much damage had been done down the slope by reason of the eruption. The disturbance appeared to have been confined to the vicinity of the place where our friends were at the time it happened.

"I wonder how things are going in Salina?" remarked Joe.

"Probably that boat captain is having all he

wants to do taking the people away," suggested Blake. "But this place isn't as dangerous as it seems."

"It's bad enough," declared Mr. Piper. "We'll never get away alive!"

They were glad enough to eat a meal in comparative quiet. The disturbances of nature appeared to have subsided—at least for a time—and there was peace, though an occasional rumble below them told of something going on within the earth.

After the meal, Joe and Blake took a stroll down the trail, hoping to get a sight of the two porters. The natives had taken nothing with them on their flight, not even food, and it was feared that they might suffer.

"I wonder if they really did run away?" ventured Joe, as they started back, not having seen anything of Harshi or Moduk.

"What do you mean?" inquired Blake, curiously.

"I mean, could they have been caught in that melted lava; or engulfed in some crack that opened when the shock came that took the roof off our friendly crater?"

"I don't believe so," replied Blake. "In the first place, they wouldn't come up the mountain for anything, and nothing has happened below our

camp, as you can easily see. There isn't even a new crack around here."

"Then I suppose they simply ran off."

"It looks that way. And they may come back. I hope they will."

"Same here," conceded Blake.

They made ready for the night, though all were too excited to sleep much. Finally, toward twelve o'clock, the two boys dozed off, though Professor Martin remained up, making some notes by the light of a lantern. He was a constant worker in the interests of science.

It must have been about three o'clock when Blake was awakened by a tremor of the ground. At the same time Joe sat up.

"Here comes another earthquake!" cried the latter.

"Feels like it," said Blake. "Let's tumble out!"

They hurried from the tent, but the disturbance subsided almost as soon as it began. The professor and Mr. Piper had also been aroused.

"Look over there!" suddenly cried Joe. "The Indians have come back!"

"What makes you think so?" asked Blake.

"I can see the flicker of their camp fire," came the answer. "Hi, Harshi—Moduk! Come here!" and Joe shouted.

There came no reply.

"That isn't a camp fire," said Blake, after an observation.

"Why not?" Joe wanted to know.

"Because it's too long-drawn-out. It's more like a streak of fire on the ground."

"What's that?" cried the professor, coming closer to the lads. "A streak of fire, you say?"

"Over there," said Joe, pointing.

The scientist took one look, and then started toward it. The others followed. The darkness of the night was now lighted by the strange fire so close to the ground. Suddenly the scientist stopped.

"You're right!" he said to Blake. "That is no camp-fire. Don't go any nearer."

"Why not?" asked Joe.

"Because that is fire from somewhere in the interior of the earth. It is blazing up through cracks in the surface—probably caused by lighted gases. This must be investigated, but we must be careful!"

## CHAPTER XIX

### IN DIRE PERIL

THE words of the professor brought the boys to a halt. Mr. Piper also stood still.

"If the fire is as close to the surface as that," remarked Joe, "we're in rather a predicament, I take it."

"If the crust should give way and drop us down," put in Mr. Piper, "why, naturally, we would be——"

"Hold on!" cried Blake, warningly. "Think it, but don't say it, C. C."

"Fortunately the blazing cracks don't seem to be any place but over there," went on Professor Martin, pointing to the place where Joe had at first thought he saw the camp-fire of the returned Indians. "The phenomenon is confined to one place. I think we may go a little closer and investigate."

Cautiously they approached, and beheld a curious sight. The crust of the earth, baked hard by

the heat beneath it, had cracked in a number of places, and through these openings there shone the light of internal fires, while ribbons of flame shot up now and then to a considerable distance.

"I wonder if we couldn't film that?" said Blake. "Of course it isn't as bright as a flashlight, but we have some very sensitive film, Joe, and we might show something of what it looks like. I'm going to try."

"Do," urged Professor Martin. "I want to get as complete a record as possible of all that takes place, and the pictures, even though faint, would be of great assistance afterward in explaining the phenomenon. In the meanwhile I will make some observations, and take notes."

Joe and Blake were soon ready with the automatic camera, as that contained the most sensitive film. They started it, and then placed it as close as possible to the blazing cracks. Then they stood and watched the play of the flames, while the compressed air motor in the moving picture camera took view after view.

"Don't go too close," cautioned C. C., as he saw Joe and Blake getting nearer to the openings in the crust.

"Oh, we're careful," sang out Blake, but the next moment he jumped back in a hurry, for, just ahead of him appeared an unexpected fissure,



from which shot a ribbon of flame, not ten feet away from the lad.

"Wow!" cried Joe. "This is too close for comfort," and he and his chum hastened back nearer their camera.

"What do you think causes this, professor?" asked C. C., when the scientist had finished making his notes by the light of the leaping flames.

"My idea is that some of the lava from the volcano found an underground outlet, and flowed along like some stream of water, under the surface. At this point it came up toward the top, and cracked the ground. Then, remaining stationary, the red hot lava gives off gases that flame and blaze. At least that is my theory."

"And I guess it is as good as any," said Blake. "Well, I think that is enough of a film of this," and he took up the small automatic camera.

The flames had now begun to die down, so that it was almost impossible to get views of them by their own light at the speed necessary to make moving pictures. The professor had made all the notes he needed, and they all decided to go back to their tents, to sleep if possible.

Fortunately they were not further disturbed that night save by a strong sulphuric odor at times, and they were getting rather used to that.

"I think the big chimney is getting ready to cut up some more high jinks," remarked Joe, as he sniffed the air, before turning over to sleep again.

"I shouldn't wonder," answered Blake. "And, Joe," he added in a lower voice, "I think it's about all up with the professor's friends."

"So do I—and I'm not C. C. Piper, either. I wonder how things are going in the town, and in other parts of the island?"

"Hard to say. We seem to be the centre of attraction here, as far as disturbances go. But I'd like to take a run back to the hotel and look around. Maybe those scientists have succeeded in getting out, and they may be there wondering what has happened to us."

"It may be. We'll hint that to Mr. Martin in the morning, and see how he takes it."

But in the morning there was something else to occupy the attention of all. Directly after a hasty breakfast, and a look down the mountain, and over as much of the country as could be viewed to see if the porters were in sight, the volcano started to throw out showers of rocks. So violent was the outburst, and of such a peculiar character, that the energies of the boys were directed to getting moving pictures of it, while the professor busied himself with his instruments

and note books. So the matter of proposing a trip back to Salina was put off for the time.

"This is a regular rip-snorter!" cried Blake, grinding away at the handle of his camera.

"That's what it is," replied his chum. "Say, look at that, now!"

The air above them was dark with the smoke from the fire-mountain, and the smell of sulphur was almost overpowering. The showers of rocks were intermittent—sometimes a large number being thrown out, and again only a few. Ashes, too, were scattered all over. Fortunately they were not hot, and the direction of the force within the volcano tossed the stones away from, instead of toward, the party.

Suddenly there came a trembling to the earth, and one shock so violent that Joe's camera was displaced, making it necessary for him to grasp it quickly to prevent it toppling over.

"More trouble and plenty of it!" cried Blake. "We're in for an earthquake after quite some rest."

"It's my opinion that we'd better be getting out of this!" cried Mr. Piper, but none of the others paid much attention to him. They were too busy with their own affairs. Joe managed to set his camera upright again, and proceeded to take pictures.

But the earthquake shock was only momentary, and quickly passed. It seemed to increase in severity, however, as it passed down the mountain, much after the manner of a great wave in the sea. The ground was cracked open in several places, and several small landslides occurred.

"Lucky we're not down there!" cried Joe, and Blake nodded in assent.

Then came a period when only smoke and ashes were thrown from the volcano. But the smoke seemed to be getting denser every moment.

"We're in for the biggest eruption yet, I think," said the professor. "There must be a tremendous force down in that crater."

Hardly had he spoken than there sounded a terrific explosion. Deep down in the interior of the mountain though it was, it came like a sudden and terrific clap of thunder. The whole volcano seemed to vibrate with the shock of it.

"We'd better look out!" cried Joe.

"Something's going to happen," added Blake.

"I'm going to run for it—that's one thing that's going to happen—and happen right away," declared Mr. Piper, suiting the action to the words.

A moment later there was a great outpouring of rocks from the crater, and this time they were

thrown in such a direction that they shot over the heads of our friends.

"Run! run!" cried the professor. "They'll fall in a few seconds, and many of them are large enough to crush us. Run!"

"Make for the little rocky cave!" shouted Blake. "We can all squeeze in until this rock shower is over."

"That's it!" agreed Mr. Martin. "There we will be protected." And they headed for the cavern where the knocking sounds had been heard. In dire peril they raced on, the boys taking their cameras, and the professor his instruments.

## CHAPTER XX

### SIGNALS

SMALL rocks began showering about them as they ran on, and they knew larger ones would follow. They tried to increase their pace, but too much speed was dangerous, as the ground over which they were advancing was rough. Fortunately they had not far to go.

"We'll never make it!" cried C. C. Piper, as he looked up, and saw how close the main shower of big rocks was to them.

"We've got to!" yelled Blake. "Run on!"

At that moment a small fragment of stone struck the comedian on the shoulder, bruising him painfully.

"I knew it!" he cried, ruefully. "I'm done for now! I had no business to come to such a place. I'm going back to the acting profession. This is no place for me."

"Don't stop to talk—run on!" yelled Joe, and with a final burst of speed he reached the rocky

cave, and darted into it. Depositing his camera he started to rush out again, to help the professor, who was burdened with two scientific instruments, though C. C. Piper offered to take one. However, Mr. Martin refused.

There was no need for Joe's aid, though, as the others in the party were now at the cave. In they crowded, it being rather a tight squeeze, but it was a case of "any port in a storm," and this certainly was a storm of the worst kind that was about to burst upon them.

Though it has taken some minutes to write what took place, it did not take as long for it to happen, and, since falling bodies, according to a well-known law, increase in speed the farther they descend, the rocks were now coming down with terrific momentum.

Our friends were no sooner in the cave than the small stones, that had begun dropping before they had gained the shelter, had changed to great boulders. They could be heard crashing down all around the cave, and from the entrance they could be observed burying themselves deep in the earth, like cannon balls.

"This is a regular bomb-proof," remarked Blake, as he listened to the rain of missiles on the roof.

"There could be no better shelter," said the

professor. "The top of the cave, as well as the floor and sides, is of solid rock, and I fancy even the bombardment of the volcano will be useless against it."

"A little more elbow room wouldn't be so bad," spoke Mr. Piper.

"You ought to be thankful you can breathe," said Joe.

"I can hardly do that," grunted the comedian. "But I am glad not to be outside."

"It seems to be letting up a little," came from Blake, as he peered out. It was just as though they had taken shelter from a hard rainstorm, and the lad's remark applied to that as well as to the shower of rocks.

"Yes, not so many of them are falling now," agreed Mr. Martin. "I should like to know whether those rocks are hot or cold. That is a fact that must be noted."

As he spoke several smaller fragments of stone fell close to the opening of the cave. Joe reached out and touched one with the tip of his finger.

"Ouch!" he cried.

"They are hot," said the professor, calmly. "I'll make a record of that as soon as we get out of here."

"Hot! I should say it was!" cried Joe, as he blew on his finger. "It almost raised a blister."



"I think those rocks, that were expelled from the volcano with such force, are similar in character to the melted lava," went on the scientist. "I will make an examination as soon as I can."

"You mean when they are cool, I hope," spoke Joe, grimly.

"Of course, my dear boy. My theory is that the rocks were thrown out so quickly that they only got very hot instead of being melted into lava. Had they remained in the crater a little longer they would have issued forth in a molten stream. That, I think, is reasonable."

With another loud explosion the shower of rocks again increased, and then came a period of calm. No more of the stones seemed to be falling, and Joe, looking out, reported that the volcano was smoking only a little now.

"The fires, and the force of the confined gases, are lessening," declared Mr. Martin. "I think it is safe to go out now. Shall we try it?"

"It would be better if we had umbrellas made of boiler iron," declared Mr. Piper, with a grim laugh. "Then we would not mind the rocky rain."

"Oh, I think all danger is over—at least for the present," said the scientist. "And when another shower of stone is about to take place the

explosion in the crater will give us warning. But I think we had better stay near the cave."

"So do I," agreed Blake.

"It wouldn't be a bad idea to make our camp near here," said Joe. "Then if anything happened in the night we would have some place to run to."

"An excellent suggestion," declared Mr. Martin. "We will adopt it, I think. Of course this is the first time the rocks have fallen on this side of the mountain, but there is no saying that they won't repeat the performance here. We will consider the cave our emergency shelter."

It did not take long to move their camp stuff and the tents up near the little cave. The boys and C. C. Piper did most of this work. The professor offered to help, but he looked so longingly at the stones scattered about, which he wished to inspect before they got cold, to see if they conformed with his theory, that Blake said:

"Go ahead, Professor. We can do this while you get at your scientific work."

"All right," quickly agreed the little man. "It will not take me long, and then I will help you."

But the boys and the comedian had made the transfer before Mr. Martin had finished with his investigations. There were many rocks scattered

about, some of them very large, and they were all hot. They had to be avoided as the boys went back and forth transferring the camp goods.

The bullock carts they left where they had been, as they were too heavy to move, and would not be of much service. The bullocks themselves were about where they had been left, contentedly eating the grass. There was plenty of water for them, and they were in a sheltered place, under an overhanging cliff, so that it was unlikely any stones would fall on them, if another shower occurred.

Of course the animals might be destroyed in an earthquake, or by some eruption from the volcano, but they had to take that chance.

"Those porters must have gone back to the city," observed Joe, looking about for any signs of Harshi or Moduk.

"Yes, and they may be spreading the story that we have perished," added Blake.

"Say, what about asking the professor to go back to Salina?" suggested Joe. "You know we were going to do that."

"Yes," agreed Blake, and they acquainted C. C. with the plan they had formed the night before.

"A good idea," declared the comedian. "We'll do it. I don't believe there's a chance that those other scientists are alive, and we might as well get into a comparatively safe place. I want to

get away from here. I've had enough of San Locas."

"And we have about all the moving pictures we need," added Blake. "Unless something very different occurs from what has already taken place we'll only be making the same sort of films over again."

"That's right," agreed his chum. "Well, as soon as we get our new camp in shape, we'll spring it on the professor."

The scientist was not so much opposed to the project as the boys thought he would be, when they broached the subject to him. He paused for a moment before replying, however.

"I am sorry to say that I about agree with you," he began. "I can see little hope for my friends, and certainly this neighborhood is getting to be a dangerous place. I do not want to subject you nor myself to unnecessary risks. If I thought there was a chance that I could aid my friends, and those poor men they hired, I would not stir from here. But, as you say, the chance is very remote. We will start back in the morning, if you like.

"I have a few more observations I would like to make. I would also like to get nearer to the top of the mountain, and, in fact, look down into

the crater of the volcano. But, of course, that is not to be thought of when it is so active."

"Could it ever be done, Professor?" asked Joe.

"Oh, yes; scientists, and even moving picture operators, have often gone down into the craters of volcanoes, but only where the activity was very slight. There was in those cases practically no danger of an eruption—or, at least, if one happened, it would be a minor one.

"But that is out of the question here. We must content ourselves with a rather distant view. And we have had very good success here. There may be more eruptions, but they will probably be of the same character as those we have witnessed. As for the earthquakes, they are constantly occurring, and one part of the island is as good as another for picturing and observing them. So we will start back for the hotel to-morrow. I am afraid the fate of my friends is settled."

The new camp was hastily arranged, no great amount of work being spent upon it, since they had decided to leave so soon. Still, even for one night, it was felt best to be near the cave in order to be able to run into it in case of another shower of the stones from the volcano.

It was toward evening when Joe, who had gone in the "bomb-proof," as he and his chum called it, made a curious discovery. He had been carry-

ing in some of the objects that it was desired to protect better than in the tents—the dynamite, for example—and on his way back for another load the lad paused.

“There’s that knocking, or pounding, again,” he called to Blake, who was near the mouth of the little cavern.

“Well, it’s probably the same thing—rocks falling in some inner cave,” replied his chum.

“I was wondering if the professor wouldn’t like to listen to the sounds again with that instrument of his,” went on Joe. “He always likes to make a second observation of anything strange, in order to correct his first theory.”

“Well, maybe he might. I’ll call him.”

“Wait a minute!” exclaimed Joe, as Blake was about to start off. “Just come here and listen to this; will you?”

Struck by something in his chum’s manner, Blake entered the cave with him.

“Put your ear close to the wall,” directed Joe, “and tell me what you hear.”

“Have you tried it?” asked Blake.

“Yes, but I want to get your opinion before we call the professor. Maybe I’m mistaken.”

Blake placed his ear close against the rocky wall. For a moment he remained motionless, and then he started.

"Do you hear it?" asked Joe.

"Yes. Hush! Let me listen."

Again he remained motionless, and his chum watched him eagerly. Then Blake began motioning with his hand.

"This is what I hear," he said, in a low voice, and he indicated a regular succession of sounds, with spaces in between—a series of them.

"That's it!" cried Joe. "That's just the way they sounded to me. Blake, I think we're on the brink of a big discovery!"

Still Blake held his ear to the rocky wall. Finally he took it away, and glanced at Joe curiously.

"The sounds are certainly different from those we heard here before, with the professor's instrument," he said.

"That's what I think," said Joe. "I thought so the moment I heard them. They come regularly—not by fits and starts as the others did. If they are rocks dropping they are the queerest rocks I ever heard of."

"They are not rocks," declared Blake. "At least, they are not rocks falling of themselves."

"Then you think, Blake——?"

"The same as you, Joe," interrupted his chum.

"I think they are signals."

"Signals! Just what I would have said!"

"Signals made by the imprisoned scientists!" went on Blake. "Joe, call the professor at once. Those men—or some of them—may be alive, and we must try to save them. This is the greatest ever! To hear signals through the solid rock!"



## CHAPTER XXI

### THE SEALED-UP CAVE

BOTH lads darted from the little cave on the run. They saw the professor not far off, busily engaged in making notes about the falling rocks. Together they called to him.

"Yes? What is it?" he asked.

"Come!" called Blake. "They are knocking on the wall."

"Knocking? Who is knocking?" asked Mr. Martin, curiously.

"Your friends, we think," answered Joe.

"The scientists in the sealed-up cave," added Blake.

"What!" cried Mr. Piper, as he dropped a bundle of bed coverings he was carrying. "You don't mean to say you have found them?"

"We don't know whether we have or not," said Joe. "Come and listen, both of you."

The professor and the comedian lost no time in heading for the cave. In order that he might

give his whole attention to the sounds, Blake suggested that the scientist go in alone, and use his stethoscope, which, for want of a better name, I shall call the instrument he used.

Almost breathlessly the others stood outside and waited for his opinion. He was not long in giving it. After listening a moment or two with the end of the instrument against the rocky wall, in the place Joe had indicated, Professor Martin called out:

"It is them, all right!"

"Your friends?" asked Blake, eagerly.

"My friends," was the reply.

"Are they signaling by the Morse code, or the Continental, so much used in wireless?" asked Mr. Piper.

"Neither," was the answer. "It is a code that Professor Bristol and I made up between us for amusement. He is tapping that out, and for that reason I am sure it is my friends. It might be possible for falling rocks to sound something like the Morse telegraphic code, but this private way of signaling that we devised between us cannot be duplicated. Oh, I have found my friends at last!"

"Hardly found them," said C. C., grimly; "for there is no way of telling where they are."

"Oh, yes, there is," replied the professor, and his voice now was filled with hope.

"How?" asked the comedian.

"If they can, by means of tapping on the rocky wall of their cave-prison, signal to me, I can also signal to them, and in that way we can be directed to the cave."

"Hurrray!" cried Blake.

"Can you make out anything they are saying, by means of those tapping signals?" asked Joe.

"Yes," replied the professor, after listening a while. "They are spelling out the word 'Help' over and over again."

"Then tell them we are here to help them!" cried C. C. Piper, with a return of his African optimism. "Then we'll get busy and make the rescue. Ask them in which direction we are to dig."

"That is very important," decided the professor. "I must get our direction. Now I am going to signal them."

With his stethoscope at his ears, so that he might hear the answering taps, Mr. Martin began to send a message through the solid rock, by tapping on it with a geological hammer that Blake brought to him.

To the boys and to Mr. Piper it was all much of a mystery, for they could not hear the taps of

the imprisoned men, and the knocking of the professor was not intelligible to them, as they were not familiar with the secret code.

Finally the scientist took the instrument from his ears, and said:

"Well, I have confirmed my first thought. It is Professor Bristol; and my other friends—Hayden, Brown and Terrill—are with him. Also several native porters. They are weak and sick, but they have something still to eat, some water, and they get fresh air."

"But where are they?" cried Joe.

"In a sealed-up cave, near the crater of the volcano," was the answer.

"Near the volcano?" cried Blake. "How can that be?"

"By means of tapping signals," said the professor, "I learned from them that, after they entered the cave where Harshi saw them, and were imprisoned in it, they found a way of ascending through a passage in the interior of the mountain.

"They thought they were going to escape, but another earthquake walled them up in a cave near the crater, as they can tell by the heat and the noises."

"But how do they get air?" asked Joe.

"The rocks that fell in, closing the top or out-

let of this new cave, did not seal it so tightly but what air can enter," was the reply. "It is not good air, for it is hot and mingled with sulphur fumes, but they can live in it. They implore us to hasten to their rescue."

"And we will!" cried Blake. "Did they say near what part of the crater they were?"

"No, they cannot tell. We must ascend the mountain, and make a search. They will continue to tap out their signals, and when ours sound more plain to them, or theirs to us, we will know that we are drawing near. We will keep in constant communication."

"Do you mean some of us are to stay here in the cave?" asked Mr. Piper. "If so, how can that one person transmit the signals to the others, not knowing the code?"

"We will all go in search of the sealed-up cave," spoke Mr. Martin. "The mountain is all solid rock near the top, my friends say, and we can tap through that as well as through the rock of this cave. It appears that the rock is of a peculiar kind, that carries sound vibrations easily."

"Then let's start off!" cried Joe.

"It will be better to wait until morning," decided the professor. "It is getting late now, and it is hard to do things after dark. I will send a

signal to my friends, telling them that we will soon start out. I'll tell them not to lose heart."

"That's the idea!" cried Mr. Piper.

Once again the professor applied his instrument to the face of the rock, and began tapping his message. That he got an answer was evident from his listening attitude from time to time. Then he said:

"They are much relieved in mind now. They will listen for any of our signals, and reply to them. Now, boys, get ready for hard work to-morrow."

"And the finest moving picture ever made—if we can make that rescue!" cried Joe.

The night passed without incident, and early the next morning they started to search for the walled-up cave, heading for the summit of the mountain that might, at any time, send out a shower of rocks, or a stream of molten lava.

## CHAPTER XXII

### PRISONERS ALL

"WHAT is the first thing to be done?" asked Mr. Piper, as he walked along with the two boys and the professor. "I mean, where do we start first? You see, I'm used to getting my cue—in being told when to come on the stage, so to speak—and I like to know what we are going to do."

They were, as I have said, proceeding up the slope of the volcano, which just at present was inactive. Joe and Blake each carried a camera, in addition to a pack containing food and various articles thought necessary. The professor and C. C. were also well laden, and picks and shovels were carried.

"What is the first thing to be done?" repeated the comedian.

"Find that walled-up cave," declared Blake. "Then, if possible, rescue our friends."

"That's it—I suppose," conceded Professor Martin. "And the cave is somewhere up there,"

and he pointed toward the summit of the peak, which was now wrapped in a slight smoke-cloud from the volcano, though it was only the aftermath of an eruption.

"Of course my friends could not give the exact location," he went on, "and so we will have to make quite an extended search. And we must be as quick as possible, for they have very little food left. Fortunately, they told me by means of the signal knocks, they have considerable water, as it trickles out of a crack in the rocky wall of their cave, and they have been catching and saving it."

"Then everybody look for a place that seems to have been disturbed by an earthquake shock," suggested Joe. "Every time we come to a mass of rocks that looks as if it might conceal a cave we'll stop and give some signal raps. Then by the answer we can tell if we are right."

"A good idea," declared Professor Martin. "Owing to the peculiar formation of the rocks, their hardness and the numerous cavities and air chambers in them, sounds will carry a long way."

"Were the first knocks we heard in the small cave the signals of your friends, or merely falling rocks?" asked Blake.

"That I did not think to ask," replied the scientist. "Professor Bristol said they had been



knocking a long time, however, hoping that some one would hear them, and try to effect a rescue."

They kept on up the slope, pausing now and then to investigate some spot they thought looked favorable to their purpose. At such times they would find some solid rock, and tap on it in the pre-arranged form. Back would come the faint answering signals, showing that they had not yet neared the walled-up cave.

They halted at noon for lunch, while the boys took a few views to add to their already large collection. They had never, as yet, gone as close to the crater as this, and, though still some distance from it, the increase in the sulphuric odor was very noticeable, while the air felt distinctly warmer.

"There must be great fires in the interior of this mountain," remarked Blake.

"Yes, I don't see how those imprisoned scientists can stand it," remarked Joe.

"They are well protected by rocky walls of great thickness," the professor informed them. "These serve as an effectual screen to the heat. Otherwise they could not live."

From time to time C. C. Piper would look apprehensively at the summit of the volcano, toward which they were gradually drawing near. Then

he would look back as if to calculate the chances of a hasty retreat.

"If she goes off while we're here," he said, in rather mournful tones, "we sure will be in the lava. There'll be nothing of us left for souvenirs."

"There you go again!" cried Blake. "Can't you be cheerful for a while?"

"What's the use, when we'll never leave this island alive?" went on Mr. Piper, who seemed in a perverse mood.

"The professor is going to tap again," put in Joe, as he saw the scientist halt and get out his stethoscope. "Let's wait for the result."

"All right," agreed the comedian. "But it won't amount to anything," and again he narrowly observed the summit of the volcano. "Don't you think that smoke is getting thicker?" he asked of Blake.

"A little," the lad was forced to admit. "But maybe if a lot of stones do shoot out they'll fall the other way."

"I wish we had been able to bring our little bomb-proof cave with us," sighed C. C. Piper.

"We're nearer, boys!" suddenly cried the professor. "I can hear the tapping much more plainly now. I think we are getting 'warm,' as the children say."

"We'll be hot if we keep on long enough," remarked Mr. Piper, nodding toward the crater.

The boys listened through the instrument, and confirmed the scientist's opinion. The tappings could be heard more plainly, and a message to this effect was sent to the imprisoned ones to cheer them up.

"I think we'll go off a little to one side, as well as ascend," decided the professor when they were again on the move. "The way looks rougher over there, as if there had been an upheaval recently."

They followed him, but when night came they had not found the cave they sought, though the rappings were still a trifle more plain.

"Shall we camp here for the night, or go back to our cave?" asked the scientist, as they came to a halt.

"It will waste too much time to go back and come up again," decided Joe.

"Let's camp out here," put in Blake. "We have our blankets, and it's so warm we won't need tents. We have enough food for two or three more meals. I say, let's stay here."

"But if there comes a shower of stones, what can we do?" Mr. Piper wanted to know.

"We'll have to trust to luck," said Blake.

"Here is a sort of rocky ledge that will be some

protection," called Joe, going toward it. "We can sleep under that."

"Well, I suppose it has to be," sighed the comedian, and then, for the first time that day, he began to whistle a light operatic air with a jolly chorus.

Aside from a slight rumbling, deep below the surface, there were no manifestations that night. A message was sent to the prisoners, telling them that the rescue had been halted by darkness, but that the search would be undertaken early in the morning.

And it was, after a hasty breakfast.

After a progress of about two hours, during which frequent tests were made, Professor Martin, following one of these halts, shook his head despondently.

"What's the matter?" asked Joe.

"The sounds are fainter now," he declared. "I think we have gone past the place. We are up too high. We shall have to go down."

"And glad enough I am of it!" exclaimed Mr. Piper. "We are getting too close for comfort."

Indeed, they were in dangerous proximity to the edge of the crater, and, had an eruption occurred, they could hardly have escaped.

The boys took advantage of their position to make some excellent moving pictures, for there

was considerable smoke now coming out of the "big chimney," and the effect was awe-inspiring at such close range.

"We will go back to the place where I last heard the raps most distinctly," decided the scientist, "and work around there."

This place was soon located, and then began a most careful search for clues. It was Joe who found the right one, and a shout from him called the others to his side.

"What is it?" cried the professor, eagerly.

"Put your ear near there!" directed the lad, pointing to some loosely heaped-up rocks. "No, you don't need the instrument," he said, as the scientist began to adjust it. "You can hear the raps plainly without even putting your ear to the ground. Try it."

The professor did so, and uttered a joyful exclamation.

"We have found it!" he cried. "At least, I think we are near the place through which they get their supply of air. I will signal to them, and then we will move away some of these rocks."

The glad tidings were quickly telegraphed through the stone to the prisoners, and then began the hard work. The place where Joe had heard the sounds was in a large depression on the side of the big mountain. It was filled with loose

rocks, most of them light enough to be tossed or rolled aside by the willing and eager workers.

"Hark! You can hear the sounds even plainer now!" cried Joe, pausing a moment.

"That's right!" cried his chum.

It was indeed so. The tappings could be distinguished even while the searchers were standing up.

Faster they worked, until, with the removal of several larger stones, they suddenly came upon what was undoubtedly the opening of a cave. Black and uninviting it loomed before them.

"This must be the entrance to it!" cried the professor. "Now we shall find my friends. Lights here, boys, and we will go in and trace them."

Even C. C. Piper was excited enough now not to offer any objections, though it must have entered the minds of all that they were running a big risk.

Joe and Blake produced their pocket electric torches, and with the way thus lighted they crawled into the cave.

"Forward now!" cried the scientist, when it was seen that the cave was a sort of long passage. "They may be at the far end," he added. "Hark to their rapping!"

The knocking on the rocks was louder now.

Eagerly the rescuers hurried on. Suddenly there came a crash of rocks. The ground seemed to tremble under their feet. The crashes increased, and sounded behind them.

"What's that?" cried Blake.

"Look!" shouted Joe, turning back toward the entrance to the cave. "The opening is closed!"

Instead of the glimmer of daylight at the cavern mouth there was nothing but blackness behind them. The rocks, probably disturbed by some slight earth tremor, had slid over the opening, making them prisoners in the cave, even as were those they hoped to rescue.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE RENDING ROCKS

REALIZATION of the terrible trap in which they had been caught held them all spellbound for a moment. Then nature began to assert herself, and they called out one to the other:

"What caused it?"

"Can we get out?"

"Shall we go forward or back?"

No one knew what to do. The sound of the falling rocks continued.

"We must go back—get out while there is yet time!" cried C. C. Piper. "The opening may not be entirely closed."

"But my friends!" cried the professor. "This will seal their doom, I'm afraid!"

"And our own, too, I fancy," said Blake, in a low voice. "But we must take what chance there is!" he added, in louder tones.

With one accord they turned back. The flashing of the electric torches showed them the way.



In a short time they were at the entrance. One look was enough. The rocks had closed it completely. The boulders were larger than those they had removed; it would be impossible to shift them without powerful machinery. And they had entered the cave in such haste that they had brought nothing with them save the electric torches.

"Prisoners!" said Professor Martin. "We are caught like rats in a trap!"

He went closer to the entrance, and pushed with his hands on the rocky door. It was as though he tried to move the side of the mountain.

Suddenly there came a low rumble, and the rocks shifted slightly with a grinding, rending sound, a few of the lighter stones between the others being crushed by the heavy mass.

"Look out!" cried Joe, warningly; "they may fall on you, Professor," and, springing forward, he fairly dragged the little scientist back.

"I wish they would fall either out or in," remarked C. C., in gloomy tones. "Then we might have a chance."

The rumbling subsided and the rocks became quiet. They had settled even more firmly in the mouth of the cave.

"Was that an earthquake?" asked Joe.

"Probably," replied the professor. "I think that was what caused the rocks to slide down in

the first place. This was a second tremor. I suppose we should have removed them all from around the mouth of the cave before we entered."

"There were too many," declared Blake. "Besides, even if we could have done that, the earthquake shock would have shoved others in, or even crushed the opening of the cave together, so we would be no better off."

Silently they contemplated the rocky door that had closed after them, being wedged so tightly in place that no power short of dynamite could loosen it.

"Well, what's to be done?" asked Joe.

"Sit here and—wait for the end," replied the gloomy comedian.

"No!" declared Blake in ringing tones. "We won't sit still. There must be a way out! We'll find it and——"

"Hark!" interrupted the professor

They listened intently. From the far end of the cave there were sounds of tapping.

"My friends—the other scientists!" cried Mr. Martin. "They are in this cave! We must go to them!"

"If they were in here, why did they not come out?" asked Joe. "They could as easily have moved the loose stones as we did."

"Probably they are in some other division of

this cave, hindered from coming out into this part by a wall of rock such as that," explained Blake. "Let's follow those sounds."

Again they listened. The tapping continued.

"Help!" spelled out the professor as he listened to the letters of the secret tapping code. "They are calling for help again. Perhaps this last tremor made their condition worse.

"My poor friends!" he went on. "We need help ourselves, and how are we to help you? But we will do all we can."

Quickly, then, he spelled out, by tapping on the rock with a stone, a message telling the other prisoners what had happened, ending by saying that they would do all in their power to aid them.

"Now to explore the cave!" cried the professor. "Fortunately the air seems fresh, and I am not sure, but I thought I heard the trickle of water. Yes," he added a moment later, following a period of silence, during which all listened intently; "there is the drip of some liquid. There may be a spring here.

"Come!" he cried, in more cheerful tones, "our situation might be worse. We have water and fresh air. Now to go to the farthest end of this cave."

As they advanced they looked about them.

The electric torches showed a high, rocky cavern, with the floor, the sloping and irregular sides, and the roof of solid stone. It glistened with moisture in places. As the professor said, the air seemed fresh.

At intervals they heard the tapping again. It seemed to get louder as they went on. They had gone perhaps a hundred feet when they came to a place where the cave seemed to divide. There were two caverns instead of one.

"Which shall we take?" asked Joe.

"To the left," decided Blake, on the spur of the moment, and they went that way.

This path seemed rougher than the other, but the sound of dripping water was plainer.

"I'm going to have a drink," declared Joe, and, flashing his torch about, he discovered where a little stream was falling from a point of rock. Putting his hands under it Joe caught some.

"Faugh!" he exclaimed a moment after he had sipped it. "Sulphur water!"

"I thought it might be," said the professor. "But it will at least save our lives, though it is unpleasant," he added, as he tasted it. "I have had worse water. Well, forward again."

"The tapping sounds fainter now," said Mr. Piper, after a bit. "Perhaps we came the wrong way."

"I'm sure of it," said Blake, a moment later. "We are at the end of this cave," and he flashed his light on a wall of solid rock that barred their passage.

"Back to the other way," called the professor, and they hastened to retrace their steps. Again they went forward, and it did not take long to make sure that this way was the one they should have taken at first. The tapping grew louder and louder.

"We are nearing them!" cried Joe.

"Hark!" exclaimed his chum.

A distant shout came to their ears.

"My friends!" cried the professor. "We are coming!" he cried, as loudly as he could, and the echoes of the cave nearly deafened them.

On they hastened. The answering shouts became plainer. Then they came to a pile of heaped-up rocks, extending from the floor to the roof of the cave.

"Where are you?" called Professor Martin. "Are you there, Bristol—Hayden—Brown—Terrill? I'm Professor Martin. We came to help you, but——"

"Yes! Yes!" was the answering shout. "We are here, Mr. Martin. Oh, can you help us? We are almost at the end of our resources, and we

can't get through this wall of rock, though it seems so loosely piled. Can you help us?"

Professor Martin paused before communicating the disheartening news.

"We are——" he began, and then his voice was drowned in a rending shock that seemed to shake the whole mountain. There was the sound of grinding rocks. The floor of the cave seemed to heave up.

"Another earthquake!" cried Blake. "We are doomed now!"

## CHAPTER XXIV

### SAVED

CRASH followed crash. The rocks were rent and shattered. Cries came from the natives imprisoned with the lost scientists, and all feared the roof would come crashing down on their heads at any moment.

The ground was heaving so that it was with difficulty the rescuing party kept their footing. Fortunately the floor of the cave did not crack open. It remained in a solid piece, like the deck of a ship heaving on the waters of the ocean.

Then came a movement in the pile of rocks that confronted our friends—the rocky barrier that was between themselves and those they had come to rescue.

“Watch out!” yelled Joe.

“Jump back!” advised Blake, though it was hard to move over that heaving floor.

The rocky pile, that was like a partition, dividing the cave into two parts, began sliding

and shifting. The rocks ground and crashed together.

"The whole place is coming down!" cried Joe.

He flashed his torch on the pile of rocks. Then to him, and all of them, was revealed a curious sight.

Suddenly the earthquake passed. The cave no longer shook and trembled like the cabin of a ship at sea. But the rocks continued to slip down, and, as they did so, there appeared, near the roof of the cave, where the rock pile had pressed against it, a large opening. And through this opening there shone a light.

"The way is open! The way is open!" cried Professor Martin. "Now we can reach my friends!"

He did not stop to think that the main entrance to the cave was still closed, and that though the two parties might be united they were still prisoners.

With the cessation of the shock, the rocks stopped tumbling, then became motionless. Blake pressed the spring of his electric torch and gave more light. From beyond the now broken barrier came a shout.

"We are coming to you," cried a voice. "We can stay here no longer. Our part of the cave is being flooded with water."



A figure appeared in the opening at the top of the rock pile. It was as if the partition between two rooms had been cut through at the top.

"Professor Bristol!" cried Mr. Martin.

"Yes, we are all here!" came the answer. "Oh, Martin, what a dreadful calamity! Are you still alive?"

"Yes, we are not hurt a bit. But how are you? Where are the rest?"

"They are coming. Oh, how glad I am to see you! It seems ages that we have been imprisoned here!"

He scrambled down the rocky pile, followed by the others, the West Indians coming last. Some of the professors, who had been imprisoned so long, had torches similar to those carried by Blake and Joe, and these they flashed to show the way.

The earthquake seemed to have passed now, and all was quiet inside the cave. One after another, those who had been imprisoned behind the pile of rocks joined those who had but lately entered the cave. Professor Martin shook hands with his friends and introduced the boys and Mr. Piper.

"And now tell me what happened," he said to Mr. Bristol. "We have a few moments of quiet,

for there is no telling when something else may happen.”

“Briefly,” began Mr. Bristol, while his friends gathered about him, and the natives looked on in wonder, “we came on ahead of you, as you know. We started out to investigate the earthquake shocks and the volcano. We heard of a wonderful cave, and decided to——”

“I know the story up to the time you entered the cave,” interrupted Professor Martin. “We had with us one of your porters, Harshi.”

“Ha! Then he did escape!” exclaimed Mr. Bristol. “We were puzzled about him. Then, as you know, we entered the cave. Almost immediately it closed on us in a terrific crash. When it grew quiet we found an interior way upward. We reached another cave.

“Then came a more terrific grinding and shifting. We were lifted up and pressed down, but, through it all, the cave seemed to keep its form. It was as though it was a strong-box in the midst of a moving mountain.

“Finally it became quiet, and we took stock of our situation. There we were, imprisoned; but we had food with us, there was water at hand, and we could get air. So there we have lived ever since, but we are almost at the end of our supplies, and up to a little while ago our water supply

was low. We, as you know, began to tap for aid. How you managed to hear us is best known to yourselves. Also how you found this cave.

"We have tried to get out, but that barrier was impassable. Now, by a force of nature it has been broken down. The same force rendered our part of the cave uninhabitable because the water began pouring in, probably from some hidden lake.

"But now we are together, and can save ourselves. Let us hasten out of this cavern, for there is no telling what may happen next. Can you lead the way out?"

"No," answered Professor Martin. "We cannot get out."

"Cannot get out!" cried Professor Bristol. "Why not?" and his colleagues waited for the answer.

"Because the cave is sealed up," said Professor Martin, solemnly, and he quickly related their adventures since coming to San Locas.

"All our hopes shattered!" murmured Professor Bristol. "I had hoped that as an earthquake imprisoned us, one had also freed us."

"This cave is closed," repeated Professor Martin. "We were coming this way to seek an egress, when we heard you."

"And we can't get out that way," spoke Pro-

fessor Brown, indicating the part of the cave they had just left. "It is impossible."

"But we may get out the way we came in!" suddenly cried Blake.

"What's that?" demanded Mr. Martin. "Isn't that pile of rocks even more impassable than these were?" and he pointed to the now shattered barrier.

"It was," said Blake, "but the shock has probably made a breach in that outer wall. Let's go see. We may get out after all."

Everyone saw what he meant. With shouts of joy they followed the lead of the moving picture boys, who dashed on ahead with their electric torches.

It did not take long to get to where the entrance of the cave had been, but, even before reaching it, they saw that they were saved, for there came the glimmer of daylight, and they could look out through a great hole in the rocky door.

"Hurray!" cried Blake. "The way is open. Hurry out before it is closed again."

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE END OF MT. REGI

OUT of the cave rushed the scientists and the porters. The latter cried aloud in their joy of deliverance, and the others silently clasped hands. They could not speak.

Blake's idea had been found correct. The same shock that broke the inner barrier had shattered the outer one. The long-imprisoned scientists were free at last.

They were weak, emaciated and pale from lack of sunlight. They had not had sufficient food, and their condition had been pitiful indeed, but all this was now forgotten.

"There hasn't been much damage done out here," remarked Professor Martin, as he looked around at the place where they had left their things on entering the cave.

"No, the disturbance was mostly in the cavern," agreed Professor Bristol. "But let us hasten back to the hotel. We are in deplorable shape, and need sleep and rest—also good food."

"And we must send home word of our rescue," added Mr. Martin. "The long silence on both our parts will have worried the authorities in Washington. I have enough data about the volcano and the earthquakes. The boys have sufficient pictures, I believe, and we may as well leave the island, if you all agree."

"Yes, since you have done all the work that we were prevented from doing," said Professor Hayden, "there is no use in staying longer. We will go home."

"While we have the chance," added C. C. Piper, grimly. "I have had enough of earthquake land."

"And I think we could all stand something a little less nerve-racking," added Blake, at which Joe nodded assent.

They gathered up the moving picture cameras and the instruments of Professor Martin, as well as their other baggage. Save for a few personal belongings the other scientists had abandoned everything in the cave, and they would not risk going back for it.

They started down the mountain, glad enough to leave that terrible place. But nature was not done with them. She still had a manifestation in reserve.

The party, talking over their strange experiences, came to the cave that had served as a

shelter at the time of the rock-bombardment. There all the camp stuff was taken up, the porters carrying most of it. Poor men! They were now as happy as children over their release.

They reached the foot of the slope. The bullocks had wandered away, so the carts were of no use.

"And now for the hotel!" cried Blake. "We'll eat like civilized folks again."

"If the hotel is still there," put in C. C. "It may have been destroyed by an earthquake. In fact, the whole city may be in ruins."

"No, I can see part of it," corrected Joe, as he pointed to the plain on which Salina stood.

A little later they had finished the descent of the mountain, and tired and weary, but filled with hope and gladness, they started from the foothills toward the city. It was late afternoon, but the light was still good.

Suddenly from behind them, as they traveled on, there came an ominous noise. It was like distant thunder.

"We didn't get away any too soon," declared Joe. "I guess there's going to be another eruption."

"Look! Look!" shouted his chum. "Joe, get the cameras ready! This is going to be a corker!"

From the volcano there was pouring a dense column of smoke. Straight up it went, not lazily drifting about as it usually did before an eruption. There was a loud roaring sound, as though the mountain were being torn apart inside.

"We must get away from here!" cried Mr. Piper. "This is going to be the end of Mt. Regi!"

"We don't go until we film it!" cried Blake. "Set up your camera, Joe."

He was already busy with the machine, preparing to make a record-breaking film. He wanted Joe to take one also, so there would be no chance of a failure.

Suddenly, as the boys began to turn the handles, there spouted from the crater a mass of fire, intermingled with great rocks. The smoke became more dense. The roaring sound increased. The earth trembled.

The native porters fled with yells of fear, but the scientists, as one man, began making notes of the phenomenon, while Professor Martin got his instruments in working order.

Then, with a crash that seemed to shake the whole island, the very top of the mountain was lifted by a gigantic explosion. Up into the air went the whole crest of the volcano, crater and all. Fire and smoke mingled, there were showers of ashes—great stones were cast upward.



"This is fearful!" cried Blake.

"But we're getting great pictures," shouted Joe, as he and his chum continued to turn the handles of their machines.

The force of the great, rending explosion was directly upward, and when the pieces of the mountain began falling they went squarely back into the crater. But the crater itself was no more. The very top of the mountain was rent, being split on all sides.

In wonder the boys and the scientists gazed, while the cameras faithfully registered every action. They were far enough away to be out of the danger of falling rocks, but they were shaken by the great explosions that followed one after the other.

Then, with one fearful report, that seemed to finish the work begun—with a fierce burst of eye-burning flame, with a mass of red-hot rocks, and in a great pall of smoke—the upper part of the mountain was shivered, and then the mass of wreckage settled back upon itself.

"The end of Mt. Regi!" cried Blake.

"The end," echoed Joe.

Silence followed the awful uproar—a deep silence, while the ground still trembled. The smoke cloud drifted away, the fires died out. There was a shower of fine ashes that blew over

all of them. The stones settled back into the ruptured crater. The volcano had blown itself apart, and our friends had escaped.

"Well, it's all over," remarked Blake, as he ceased turning the handle of his machine.

"And we've got the best pictures yet!" cried Joe. "I reckon this ends the disturbances in San Locas."

And, though he did not know it, he spoke the truth.

The scientists said that the earthquakes were the result of the volcano's activity. Whether this was so or not, it is a fact that there were no more earth tremors after the volcano had blown itself apart.

Night began to settle down, and through the sulphur-laden atmosphere our party made their way back to the city. There they found great excitement. Some of the native porters had run in to tell their wonderful story. A rescue party had started from the hotel to meet the wearied scientists when the explosion came that frightened everyone. But now all danger seemed to be past.

Though many of the white inhabitants had left the island, there were a few remaining, and the hotel was still doing business. There had been several earthquake shocks while our friends had been away, but no great damage had been done.

The moving picture boys and the returned scientists were eagerly welcomed back.

There is little more to tell. Professor Martin and his friends finished making their notes and observations, and after the lava, in what remained of the crater, had cooled, they visited the wrecked volcano. Joe and Blake took many pictures.

Views of many parts of the island were also made, and then, after waiting two weeks, and finding not the slightest return of the earthquake shocks, or any activity of the volcano, our friends decided that their work in the island was finished.

"We'll go to St. Pierre as soon as our small boat comes for us," said Professor Martin. "I am anxious to get back to Washington with the results of our work."

"Your work, you mean," said Professor Bristol. "We did very little."

"But it was in coming to rescue you that we got our best pictures," said Blake.

"And I wonder when we'll get any more odd films?" asked Blake. But he could not answer. The boys did not know what lay before them.

That they were destined for other adventures was certain, however, for they were that sort of lads, and what next happened will be related in the next book of this series, to be called "The Moving

Picture Boys and the Flood; Or, Perilous Days on the Mississippi."

A week later our friends went to St. Pierre, whence they were to take a steamer for New York. They could have gone directly from San Locas, had they waited, for, with the subsidence of the earthquakes, the line on which they had set out gave orders to have its vessels stop there.

"Well, we certainly got some pictures!" exclaimed Blake, as he and Joe stood together on deck, talking over their experiences.

"Even if it was at a great risk," added his chum.

"Too much risk for me!" put in C. C. Piper. "Probably we'll run into a cloudburst or a tidal wave before we reach New York," he added, and then he began to whistle a jolly tune.

But nothing like that happened, and in due time our friends reached New York. The films made by the boys were most valuable, and with the data obtained by the scientists much knowledge was gained about volcanoes and the attending phenomena.

And now, when they have safely returned from earthquake land, we will take leave of the moving pictures boys for a time.

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